The Enchanted Woods


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VERNON LEE

THE ENCHANTED WOODS

AND OTHER ESSAYS ON THE GENIUS OF PLACES

BY

VERNON LEE

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To MISS I. O. FORD,

ADEL GRANGE,
LEEDS.

MY DEAR ISABELLA,

You made me very happy by saying that you had taken another volume of my essays on one of your lecturing and canvassing expeditions in the bleak and black North.

Take this new ragbag of impressions with you next time, my dear. And when the landscape of chimneys and desecrated rivers and inhuman suburbs is making even your spirits flag a little, pull out some of the contents at random. For the only justification of my idle wanderings is if their sunshine and romance may amuse, for a minute, people more useful, though not more willing, than myself.

Your affectionate friend,

VERNON LEE.

MAIANO, NEAR FLORENCE,
November, 1904.

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THE ENCHANTED WOODS

I MAY not tell you—it were indiscreet and to no purpose—on what part of the earth's surface the Enchanted Woods are situate. When one is in them they seem to march nowhere with reality; and after issuing one is tempted to deny their existence. For they are full of spells and of adventure without end, drawing one, up that dark, gliding river, into their hidden heart. The soil into which the thousand-year-old oaks strike their gnarled roots, is the soil of romance itself. Rinaldo or Sir Guyon was steered along those translucent brown waters in the twilight of the boughs, and enchantresses plied the oars. The heron who has rattled up from among the reeds is the cousin of the wonderful Blue Bird; the fountain of Merlin is hidden among the twisted whitethorns; perhaps Merlin himself. One wanders along muttering scraps of verse, or, as happened to

me, pursued by a phrase of recitative, a bar of purling accompaniment, telling the loves of Amadis; one follows now one path, now another, through marshland or underwood, up and down, endlessly, aimlessly, much as one reads, listlessly turning pages, the suddenly broken off, suddenly resumed narrative of Ariosto or Tasso or Spenser; the fancy roving, galloping, changing loves and identities like the willing victims of great wizards and fairies. Who was it, and where, who sailed upstream inland, inland into such woods as these, on a river like this one? The river glides swiftly, flush with the grass, clear reddish brown close by, clear golden green in the distance, but always wonderfully deep and dark; dimpling and eddying with the pebbles it rolls, murmuring and rustling where it sweeps the branches of the overhanging oaks. The sunshine is in small spots, in broken stars, through the foliage. Scarcely a rustle of leaves, a distant twitter and cooing of birds; every sound dominated by the murmur of that stream in the deep woodland silence.

I am faced by the sunset in a wide chace, green and browned over with rushes; the sun-

set among branches of immense trees and in the gaps between them, vivid crimson and bars of pale fresh blue. Back in the thickets it is dusk, and I lose my way, and am happy to lose it ; and the creaking of the branches, the sudden hurtle of wings—wild duck rising in the marsh hard by—makes my heart stop with delightful fright, and I sing, but under my breath, to keep myself company. And, of a sudden, stop. For I have struck once more that strange river, gliding exceeding swiftly, smooth, silent, dark between the trees. And the oaks and beeches loom in the dusk, colossal, the pale branches take threatening appearances, as of elephants or writhing snakes. Shapes still exist, but all colour is gone, and with it all life, in that brown light made of darkness. Such, surely, might be the rivers, the trees and thickets of Elysium, where Orpheus, seeking Eurydice, need scarcely avert his eyes, seeing her already as a shadow among shadows.

Here is a bridge, which I cross ; and issuing from the magic gloom, and striding through the rough grass under the open starlit sky, behold ! close in front is the long terraced house, with ground-floor windows standing

open, lit up orange in the serene blue evening. And my heart rejoices at the nearness of gracious and hospitable inmates, not wizards or enchantresses, but ten thousand times more delightful.

Enchanted woods are rare. But I suspect that where they exist, and seem—so deep is their magic—to march nowhere on reality, they are most often within a stone's-throw of the dear homes of every day; nor is it needful to travel very far afield in order to find them.

This belief is beginning to be borne in on me, and to cure me of hankerings after new and distant places. For although the pleasures of travel, the quest of the kindly genius of localities, have been perhaps the greatest blessing of my life, I find, on thinking things over, that on the whole I have travelled less than my neighbours, and far less for travelling's own sake. There are moments, of course, when I feel just a little saddened at seeing them start without me for wonderful places—Egypt and Spain and Greece, which I shall never go to; and when certain names, mere casual references to this thing or that, drive

into my heart a funny little wedge, gentle and yet quite sharp, of longing—the nostalgia of the hills and streets one will never see with bodily eye.

But is not this tiny pang the preparation for all happiness and its accompaniment? And is there not, in our finest pleasures, something analagous to that sense of delightful breathlessness with which we climb a hillside or make head against the waves of a sea-wind? In other words, does not the thorough having of anything require a wide margin of—I will not say of *lacking*, but of forgoing, of *not having*, other things; and is not sparingness and comparative emptiness—the sparingness and comparative emptiness of the monk's table and cell—the rule of true votaries of enjoyment? Stay at home, explore the surrounding ten miles (and no pleasure of travel is keener than that of the first hundred yards of the eleventh mile from home), promenade round one's garden or bedroom like De Maistre, and thus get up a fine hunger for distant wanderings, for China or Peru? Heaven forbid! There is no folly more vain or fruitless than to manipulate one's own happiness!

The Enchanted Woods

My growing belief is that the journeys richest in pleasant memories are those undertaken accidentally, or under the stress of necessity ; moreover, that the most interesting places are those which we stray into, or just deflect towards, as we wander for the sake of friends or work, or even in humbler quest of cheapness of living or economy of health. This belief that the best travel is not for travelling's sake goes hand in hand with a certain philosophy of life, very vague, difficult to define, but perhaps the deeper down and more inevitable, forcing itself upon one with every added year of experience. As we continue to live, and see more of our own and other folks' lives behind, or alongside of us, there arises a dim comprehension of some mysterious law by which the good things of life, all the happiness—nay, the very power of being happy—are not life's aims but life's furtherance, and their true possession depends on willing and uncalculating response to life's multifold and changing beckonings and behests. Life itself is a journey from an unknown starting point to an unknown goal. We who move along its tracks cannot overlook the

roads which cross and recross one another in endless intricacy ; and the maps we make for ourselves are the mere scrawlings of fanciful children. All we can do, while thus travelling we know neither whence nor whither, is to keep our eyes clear, our feet undefiled, to drop as much useless baggage as possible, and fill our hands with the fruits and herbs, sweet or salutary, of the roadside. But if we imagine that we can bend our course to the hidden Temples of Sais, or the Gardens of Armida, or the Heavenly Jerusalem, why ! there is no mischief in hoping ; only, methinks we shall be disappointed. For wisdom, beauty—nay, holiness itself—are not regions of the soul, attainable and separate kingdoms ; but rather, methinks, modes in which the soul carries itself, or not, along the mysterious journey to which it is elected or condemned. And as to the gods, we need not pilgrimage towards them : they walk, majestic, through the universe ; and if our spirit is reverent and cheerful, they take us now and then by the hand, and lead us a few yards—yes, lead even our poor selves, with the fish in our hand and the dog at our heels as the

two archangels lead the little Tobit in the pictures.

If this be the case, as I think, with the angels and the great gods, how much more with so humble a divinity as the friendly one of localities! We need undertake no voyages of discovery to meet the Genius Loci. There is a presiding spirit, an oread, in every venerable and well-grown tree, overtopping the forest or lonely upon the ploughed ridges; a naiad in every well-head, among the trickling cress and the mossy stones; nay, even in every cistern of fair masonry and pure beryl water open to the sky, where watering-cans are filled of evenings. And as to enchanted woods, why, they lie in many parks and girdle many cities; only you must know them when you see them, and submit willingly to their beneficent magic. Thus we enrich our life, not by the making of far-fetched plans, nor by the seeking of change and gain; but by the faithful putting to profit of what is within our grasp.

Wherefore, O benign divinity of places, bestow upon us eyes and hearts such as will recognize thy hidden shrines all over the world and within every lane's turning; and grant us,

as thy highest boon, to wander every now and then in the Enchanted Woods, between the hour of rising from our solitary work and the hour of sitting down to meat with our dear friends!

PISA AND THE CAMPO SANTO

ONE has a confused impression about Pisa that, historically as well as topographically, it has suffered a sea change; its Past washed away or silted up by flooding river and receding Mediterranean; only the cathedral and its precincts remaining stranded all alone; and life of all kinds ebbing away with every passing century, until the town becomes a place for consumptives gently to die in, and travellers, bound for less dreamy cities, to linger an hour or so, between two trains, in its churchyard.

Besides the wonderful cathedral (itself the latest monument of Hellenic and Roman art, a wonderful reconstruction, material and æsthetic, out of Antiquity's wreckage) and its kindred tower and baptistery, there remains nothing of early mediæval Pisa save a few little church fronts set in alien houses. And there are very few traces of the later Pisa of the Campo Santo's

time. The town, taken as a whole, is vaguely seventeenth century, Medicean grand-ducal coats-of-arms everywhere; nay, even early nineteenth century, the abode of Byron and Shelley, and, to me at least, full of their memories.

But from a distance, as in one's recollection, Pisa exists only in those few monuments, isolated in time as in space; and this is its great charm. Rowing down the river, as I did on a day of flood and violent sea-wind, Pisa soon lost all her city, became reduced to the cupolas of cathedral and baptistery, and finally to the belfry, rising out from the marshland, under the conical hills and the storm clouds. And bicycling, as I have often done, outside the various gates, the delight of the pinewoods by the sea, of the olive yards towards Lucca, of the great Carrara mountains and their foothills, rising in various shades of green and blue and smoke colour, various degrees of unreality—the delight, meseems, of this wide flat country of open cornfield and of hay—is brought to a head by the delight of the return; of seeing the wonderful cathedral group overtopping the walls. And then, having passed under the gate,

of finding those buildings at once, just within the walls ; nothing visible beyond, and all alone in their field of grass and sweet white clover.

Seen from a distance, particularly from outside the city, and with no trees (thank Heaven !) round about to measure things by, the cupola of the cathedral appears unimportant, becomes, what cupolas rarely are, quite sunk in the building's general shape. And that general shape, so strictly cruciform and gabled at each end, is, oddly enough, as I saw it across the meadows and marsh, the shape of some very primitive church, recalling to my mind (a strange freak of resemblance) the one, of all others, at Tintagel. A church, at all events, of infinite remoteness of age and infinite isolation, no town anywhere ; a stranded thing from other times. This merely adds to the extraordinary imaginative fascination of finding it to be, on near approach, that marvellous casket of ivory, that perfection of exquisite line and colour and carving, from the lowest pillared bays of its three apses and the flat arches and pilasters of its sides to the triumphal crosses and garlands of its high lateral gables.

Those temple-like side gables, surely the

loveliest part of its loveliness, bring home to one the fact that, as I said before, this Pisan cathedral, built by Greeks or pupils of Greeks, is one of the last works of antique art. The columns of giallo antico and of peach-blossom marble, and the slabs of porphyry and serpentine, which mottle and perfect the tea-rose colouring of the apse, are not more surely the remains of ancient temples in Greece and Asia Minor, brought home on the galleys of Pisa, than the architectural forms, the capitals and mouldings and exquisite fretwork, are the remains of the art of Hellas and of Rome, certain patterns seeming almost copied from the tomb of Mausolos, with a kind of waywardness of accent, an added flame of line and curve, belonging to the Middle Ages, and telling of Gothic art to come. What a subduing charm about these buildings, all of the same time, closely grouped—the cathedral, the baptistery, and the tower—in that field of scented white clover just underneath the city walls.

The sentiment about the Campo Santo is, of course, quite different; and within its walls it encloses a world of quite another character. And not the less so because, under the half-

effaced frescoes of mediæval moralities and legends, and alongside of the mutilated antique sarcophagi, there rest, in the place of the original Pisans—("I want to see the tombs of the Crusaders," as a burly clergyman reiterated stubbornly in English)—all sorts of modern creatures. There are all the local celebrities with eighteenth-century pigtails or heads of hair *à la* Brutus, frilled nightgowns and togas; writers on jurisprudence, on fair ladies' canary birds, or, like the illustrious forgotten Marulli, "On Mendicity," a work which a life-sized Canova genius is crowning with the greatest care. "On Mendicity!" The Middle Ages also, at the other end of the churchyard cloister, have left their views on the subject expressed in the group of maimed and blind and halt who are calling on Death in the great fresco of his triumph; and perhaps, on the whole, the insinuation therein implied, that some of these unfortunate persons will be taken to heaven by the angels of judgment, is more consolatory for mendicants than the book of the illustrious Marulli under the wreath deposited by the Canova genius. There also, near the chains of the port of Pisa, hung on the walls, is that

friend of Voltaire's and of Frederick the Great's, *Algarottus, sed non omnis*, as he is careful to inform us. One is glad to think that some portion of him escaped to more suitable spheres, for an eighteenth-century exquisite would have suffered from the Gothick bad taste and superstition of the frescoes all round. There lie all these worthies, Mme. Catalani also, mixed up with the Counts of Donoratico, forbears of Ugolino, and with the mother of the Countess Matilda. And, not least odd, the poor Northern people, Poles, for instance, who had evidently come to Pisa to die of consumption, as might so easily have happened to Keats, and would very likely have happened to Shelley if the Pisan sea had not taken him instead.

For my own part I confess I am glad of this jumble; it humanizes the place, takes it a little out of the Past, which has so long ceased to be alive that, like the painted people on the walls and the sculptured people on the sarcophagi, it seems scarcely to have gone through the bitterness and solemnity of dying.

Such as it is, the Campo Santo is an enchanting place to linger in, particularly on fine May mornings. Nothing could be more charming

than to run one's eyes along the frescoes, which, in their patchiness of colour, sometimes very vivid, sometimes utterly faded, are really like variegated flower-beds. One steps across the grass and sunshine of the enclosed space to have the pleasure of the contrast, and to see the frescoes also from the opposite side, framed in by the white carved mullions, vivid blue or mauve pink, with a figure here and there standing out.

One lets one's self speculate, but in no critical mood, whether Dante would have been pleased or furious with those frescoed illustrations to his "Inferno;" would he have countenanced that cute, cheerful, gigantic devil munching traitors, green and yellow, and picking up others to munch like the Ogre Fee Faw Fum? Had *he* such visions as these of sinners being spitted and potted and larded and emptied (like poultry) by furry devil-cooks; visions of snakes being made use of like pack-thread? Who knows! Who knows! And does not every generation of readers re-write the immortal poets?

Or else one may spell out, or make up for one's self, the legends of some of these saints—

San Ranieri, for instance—the adventures by land and sea, hunting-parties, storms with devils in the rigging, temptations of hermits in the wilderness, and tremendous battles with Gog and Magog or Prester John ; stories perhaps out of the Legenda Aurea of James of Voragine, but just a little influenced, methinks, by Anatole France. . . . And while thus lazily at work, our eye suddenly falling on the bas-relief—say, that of the chariot-horses dragging poor young Hippolytus—of some pagan sarcophagus, or caught by the blond helmeted serenity of a fine head of Ares. . . . The cloister mullions frame in, above the ivory-tinted marbles of the opposite wall, the cathedral cupola shaped like a dry poppy-head, and the pomegranate-shaped dome of the baptistery—reddish and purple and frosted with white ; and beyond them the pale-blue sky, recently washed by rain, with just one feathery cirrus. The sunshine falls blond and mild on the marble tombstones ; the swallows flash in and out ; and a fresh breeze brings the scent of the white clover outside into the cloisters of the churchyard.

SWITZERLAND AGAIN

IN my previous dealings with the genius of localities, I have had occasion to speak of the tarrying at unknown gates in alien places, and of the wistful conjuring up of vague inhabitants who might be one's friends. . . .

On the present occasion the houses which opened their doors to the wayfarer were the very same I had peered at and wondered about five years before. Or, at least, houses just like them, and in the self-same locality; country houses with overhanging châlet roofs and tubs of blue hydrangeas against the doorsteps, which I had seen during those misty walks among the green lawns, the fragrant lime-trees beyond the climbing walls and towers of that dear Swiss town.

The whole adventure (I mean my recent stay at F——) has the delightful vagueness, the disdain of how and why, the bold

foreshortening of a dream, and a dream's air of superior significance : no asking and answering of questions, no chain of dull reasons, no bothering about names or relationships, but a fine directness and taking for granted of everything that's pleasant and unusual. It seemed to radiate from the improbable circumstance that my business at F—— was purely sentimental—to meet, in fact, a friend of many years' standing whom I had never beheld with mortal eyes, albeit perhaps with the other eyes of the immortal spirit. We had missed one another Heaven knows how often ; or perhaps —who knows ?—we had never really tried to meet. This time the intention was undoubted. F—— is off the line that leads to anywhere, and I had come on purpose, with much exchange of letters. I arrived, and found her . . . No. Not really gone, though called away to Paris the previous evening. But not gone. Extremely present, on the contrary, with a pervading presence passing that vulgarly so called. Indeed, throughout her house her own portrait seemed the least personal thing ; though I would note, as a symbol of that dream-like *taking for granted*, that I recognized the portrait

as if I had been familiar with her every unseen feature. It was not like the fairy-story, though there were books and flowers arranged, and meals daintily spread by unseen hands—for the fairy hostess, though invisible, was *there*.

Nor did the hospitality stop here, since we have needs more delicate, curiosity, desire for cordiality, apparently unknown to the too-too solid heroes of fairy-tales. Friends came and fetched me for walks and drives; delightful persons with familiar speech and look and quite uncertain names, who showed me the curiosities of the town, and carried me to other friendly, delightful persons about whom I knew nothing at all and yet everything.

The houses, as I have said, are outside the town, set down in meadows of that lush Swiss grass whitened with hemlock, and you got to them along avenues of blossoming lime. Great châlets in shape—farm buildings, woodstacks, barns, all leaning against them; and themselves farm-like, pastoral, with scent of hay and dairy coming from the yards. But once inside, following the neat *bonne* along the deep, cool passage, one found one's self in the midst of old-world refinement — nay, even old-world

romance. There was the delicate Louis XV. furniture, the pale hunting-scene tapestries, the grace of branch-shaped moulding and tendril-like ironwork, the charm of pistachio-green doors and panels, of a dining-room fitted with dainty coral-coloured chairs and cupboards; all the grace of eighteenth-century France brought back from Versailles by Swiss captains of adventure, but subdued, made modest, and in a way made moral by adaptation to a wholesome rural life, by being fitted into these domestic farms, open-doored, where master and mistress walked out into the kitchen garden and among the cattle. . . .

The captain of adventure, full-wigged and corsleted, by Rigault or Rigault's pupil, looked down upon our *goûter* in that coral-red room: the table spread with home-baked cakes, with cream, butter, fruit, and honey off the farm, and set with the old-fashioned flowers which the hospitable demoiselles de B—— tied up for my journey. There were some charming young girls, relations of each other and every one, my new little friend particularly, like a rose in her rose-coloured frock; and we all sat round the big table. Then a young nephew

strolled in, booted, from riding. Then there entered another lady, connected in some way with some famous eighteenth-century letters, and having, herself, a certain cosmopolitan and literary grace which the eighteenth-century was noted for. I had been taken that morning to see *her* house, another farm-like châlet with Louis XV. interior, over a deep ravine, a rushing Alpine river, made for the delectation, one might think, of Zimmerman or Senancour, or other lovers of "solitude." There was also the house of a "grand'mère," a lady of the Diesbachs (pronounced in Versailles fashion Di-es-bacque). The overhanging châlet eaves as usual, and farm-like look; but inside rooms almost castle-like, mediæval German, and hung with the tournament armour, the swords and pikes and saddle-cloths, of some sixteenth-century ancestor.

I felt I had penetrated not merely among delightful living inhabitants, old and young, full of courtesy and kindness, but, thanks to them, into a recondite little past world—the world of a handful of Swiss nobles, originally feudal, excluded for that reason from all home concerns by the patricians of the cities, and,

therefore, from father to son, seeking military service abroad; but always returning, from Versailles or Vienna, to take a wife of their own stock, to look after their dairy meadows and their apple orchards, and to plant more avenues of limes on the green ridges above the river. A world of subdued romanticalness, no longer French, but not yet German, of the quality of the healthy parts of Rousseau, the rustic bits of "Julie," and the adventure with the two young ladies in the periwinkle woods. . . . An imaginary world, made up of scraps of letters and memoirs, impressions of furniture, phrases of songs "c'est mon berger rendez le moi," for the spinet? Perhaps; and none the worse for that. But a world certainly not more charming, and apart, and altogether unlikely, than that of these friendly and gracious-living people, who welcomed me into their fragrant flower-gardens and dear old wide-eaved houses, that serene, long summer afternoon, while the sunlight lay low on the green lush grass, all whitened with hemlock.

May I never be guilty of a word or a thought lacking the least little bit in veneration for the *Genius Loci!* But, impiety of this kind being

out of the question, I should like to confess that it would not do to be always left in *tête-à-tête* with the divinity immanent in bricks and mortar and rock and stream. Every now and then, at least, localities ought to take a human voice and human eyes, and their friendly charm become personified in kindly living creatures. This amiable miracle has often happened in my fortunate and, I trust, grateful, wanderings. Whole districts have meant friends—some, alas! existing no longer save in the memory of those places never to be revisited, like that ample and beautiful lady of the Venetian mainland, on to whom the great doges and admirals could look approvingly from the walls. Nor can the foot-alps of Piedmont, their pastures and forests, ever become dissociated in my heart from the gracious and pathetic personality of the friend I found—to keep for so short a time!—among them. One lives quicker while travelling, each hour counting for many of one's stay-at-home days. And the rapid, sudden acquaintance with localities, the brief sojourns divested of responsibility, innocent of yesterday and to-morrow, bring with them a heightened possibility of human intercourse. There is a more rapid

intuition of one another, and a freedom from doubt and shyness. And the stress of time, the feeling of *now or never*, begets a quick, sufficient stretching out of hands and clasping of personalities.

The *Genius Loci*, most impersonal of all worshipful divinities, sometimes bestows on his pious ones, quite unexpectedly, very human favours. I made these reflections, but not for the first time; and I regarded in the light of sacrificial and holy tributes to my divinity the flowers and the home-baked cakes which had been given me by the ladies in the coral-red Louis XV. room in the châlet near F——.

TUSCAN CHURCHES IN SUMMER

THE other day, instead of driving through Pistoia on my way up to the villa, I thought I should like to see again some of those little romanesque churches, and began with San Giovanni *fuor Civitas*. I like the name, bearing the thought, the image, both of the smaller town of the past and of the poplars and grass at the foot of the walls and of the open country beyond. The church, as usual, was locked, and I wasted a good deal of time in getting it opened. But I liked it all the better. For despite the sudden magic of entering an Italian church by an open main portal, where the picketed-down curtain lets in glints of sun and lets out whiffs of incense; the magic of plunging from the open glare into the dark and cool enclosure, a transition as complete as from land to water, a different mode for the whole being—despite all this, I almost prefer the shut church,

for there is a charm (in summer, of course, as with everything in the South) quite peculiar attendant on the difficult and tortuous entry into such disused buildings. There is the waiting in the side street at the *Campanello della Cura*, or in the vaulted passage where you have vistas of whitewashed stairs with crucifixes behind gratings, or of little closed gardens, perhaps an orange tree against a wall. Then the passing through various sheltered places, sacristies with their old-world threadbare decorum; and into the church, unexpectedly by some side or hidden door. The church—particularly one of these basilical barns of Pistoia — thus shut up, thus stealthily approached, seems in its emptiness so much more a thing of dreams and of ages.

The pictures on gilt grounds, the solemn carved lions of the pulpit, and birds in the capitals; the allegorical women, with features worn away by many hands, of the holy-water stoup; all these things seem in this fashion to belong more to themselves, and give one, as no open church can do, the rest and the comfort of remoteness from the practical, the present, the passing.

And since I am on this subject, let me say a word also in praise of sacristies. A sacristy has a more intimate air of the past, of the consecrated, than, most often, a church. It is safer from irreverence, and from what is but a form of irreverence, that indiscreet faith which knows exactly everything about divine matters, as it conceives them! Whereas in a sacristy the very gossip and snuff-taking of the canons assumes a certain symbolical air, and becomes, as they robe and disrobe themselves and cover and uncover their chalices, a part of a larger and more solemn ritual. Sacristies also possess, much more than churches (and more properly, for a church should be for every man and woman and child, and for their poor human rags and failings), that delicate swept and garnished quality which is the external equivalent of holiness, and the principal reason for the setting aside of places and of souls for such necessary medicinal onesidedness.

Sacristies have, moreover, the impersonal quality (a quality of sacrifice, not of vanity) of sacerdotal magnificence and—may I say so?—sacerdotal *coquetterie*. It is not for the individual's benefit or ostentation (the individual, in Italy,

being often a quite dreadfully shabby old person) this fine folding and careful putting by, this dainty air which hangs like faint incense about the white and purple clothes, the copes hung out on old-fashioned horses, the napkins and laced surplices spread out on the oak tables. In Lent particularly the sacristies get this full meaning, partly because of the prevalence of all that beautiful puce and mulberry colour everywhere, the mourning magnificence of the church. Partly also because the church itself becomes more modest and mysterious, veiled in a manner like the crucifixes with their figures barely seen through the dark silk. And then there is a charm, not wholly Christian, but with undertones of classic, Olympic associations, in the formal trophies of palm branches which are being prepared in these sacristies.

But to go back to the subject of our Tuscan churches in summer-time. Returning from the villa last Sunday, full of the sense of its delicate sweetness, I felt I could not return directly home, to unpacking and to opening of letters ; and as it was still early in these long June evenings, I stopped on my way at Santa Maria Novella. The church was

crowded, preparing for the procession (I had forgotten it was *Corpus Domini*), but very airy (all the doors and the Spanish chapel cloister wide open); and only a delicate scent of incense and of fresh flowers came from the darkness, where the great altar, covered with lights, loomed like a silver peacock out of the vagueness of curtains and deep-coloured glass. There were lots of people preparing for the procession; smart young women and boys and crowds of small children; little girls in great white feathers; one tiny mite in pale flesh-colour and gilt wings, as Cupid, with a cornucopia of flowers — a most Renaissance fancy! All these children were being bustled about by fine Dominicans with lace surplices over their white robes, and by brothers of some white confraternity with cowls turned back. It was a feast of children, really lovely and charming, like a feast of flowers, making one understand the wholesome Pagan side of the old faith, which calls the little children to it, not for benediction and exhortation only, but for delightful dressing up in the sanctuary.

From this it was funny, and in a way instructive, to go into the empty Spanish chapel.

An arrangement had been made there, near the altar, of a few straw chairs and one solitary gold and crimson chair of state ; and seated on them were five or six *pious women*, as one of my Italian friends calls them, with their hair in nets, frumpish black garments and rosaries, all hanging on the words, the rather fatuous jocularity of their spiritual director. A little feast of clerical wit and flow of pious soul which must have seemed droll enough to the lovely Giottesque Virtues and Arts, in dainty embroideries, and the courtly King Davids and Ptolomies painted on the walls. But the feast of children continued, though less sacerdotal, in the big cloister. The less favoured of fortune, whom the Church, for lack of ostrich feathers and white shoes, had not called to the great pageant upstairs, were having just as good a time here below—rolling in the grass and making mud pies in the sand, within the shelter of the pillars and in the shadow of the pointed belfry, while sounds of bells and of organs came from above.

ARLES

"EVEN as at Arles, where the Rhone stagnates, the ground is chequered over with sepulchres." Those lines of the ninth canto of the "Inferno" were in my mind the whole time, and now sum up the impressions of that autumn day at Arles.

The place Dante alluded to—the extraordinary melancholy avenue, called the Aliscamps, or Elysian Fields—remains unchanged from when he saw it, and when it suggested to him the street of tombs in the city of Dis. It opens suddenly out of one of the rough boulevards which surround the Roman walls of Arles. The rows of big plane trees and the yellowing poplars stretch into the marsh, which is revealed, despite its vines and reddening peach trees, by sedgy ditches, and, even at midday, by swarms of huge mosquitoes. The sarcophagi, mostly lidless, lie close together in

the rank grass on either side of the dusty, deserted road; their long, double line interrupted here and there by a little mediæval chapel, desecrated. And the sepulchral walk is closed by what itself looks like a great tomb: a half-ruined church, with Byzantine atrium and belfry, dilapidated, stained by time, and grown with weeds. One guesses that it was intended to exorcise the ghostly multitudes of this mortuary avenue among the marshes; and one might think that the people of Arles would have consecrated and reconsecrated it many times over. But instead of such pathetic hallowing of the old pagan cemetery, the Revolution has left only dismantled chapels, with the coats of arms of the great Provençal nobles crumbling on the vaultings: desecrated, rifled tombs presiding over that mile of empty sarcophagi.

After my morning in those Aliscamps, and in the little black cloisters of St. Trophime, I spent a couple of hours on the raised seats of the arena, watching the butchers' boys and drovers of the neighbourhood playing a harmless game of brag with half a dozen unwilling little bulls, while the whole population of Arles

looked on. After a sad scirocco morning, the Sunday afternoon was splendid — magnificent Southern October sunshine and a brilliant sky behind the jagged whitish masonry and mediæval towers of the amphitheatre. And the former seats of the arena, now rough and weed-grown, were turned into a sort of promenade for a crowd of holiday-makers, with no end of quite wonderfully pretty women in the dignified and dainty Arlesian dress and headgear. There was a band playing noisily, and a great shouting and clapping whenever a bull showed signs of charging one of the lads, who kept running up and down trying to provoke the creatures.

The whole thing was extraordinarily Southern, sunny, and gay; the bells of the churches seeming to ring the people to the arena. Yet, for all that, my impression of Arles remains on the whole sepulchral: a humble little squalid mediæval place, bull-ring and bands and beautiful women and dust-heaps and filth and all, squatting in an over-great tomb like poor melancholy Cavalcanti (not rising disdainful, waist and shoulders, like Farinata) as Dante described him after seeing the rows of sarcophagi of the Aliscamps. For even as an old print shows

the amphitheatre used as a citadel, and choked with battlemented houses and towers, so the whole town seems to have sat itself down in that Rhone marshland because of those walls, those forums and basilicas of the dead Roman city, half filling their greatness with its tortuous provincial streets, defiling their magnificence, as its population still defiles their monuments, with its mean hand-to-mouth life through the dark centuries. And in this lies the chief characteristic of Arles, in this squalor of its past life. It would be easy, in description, to turn Arles inadvertently into a kind of Ravenna; and I take note of the fact, as of one of the odd tricks of the *genius loci*, that my recollections of the place are already becoming modified, made just a little poignant and majestic by contact with the thought of that other dead city by the Adriatic. But there is nothing at Arles either of ancient empire or of mediæval romance (the romance of Ravenna's pine forests and Venetian houses). And if it is undoubtedly a tomb, it is not of the kind of those great horned sarcophagi carved with peacocks and palm trees and once shingled with beaten gold, such as stand in the sunken

churches and around the grave of Dante at Ravenna; but rather like those innumerable stone boxes, shapeless, defaced, become little more than troughs, on to which flutter down the yellow poplar leaves along the dusty, mosquito-haunted Aliscamps.

With all this hangs together a very personal impression of having got, somehow or other, far, far away from home, having lost my way by accident, into the depths of the provinces and of an unknown past. Good fortune, often repeated, has given me the habit of feeling companioned even when quite solitary on my journeys, of imagining possible future friends in remote and unfamiliar places; so that the room of an inn, the street of a new place, does not make me feel lonely.

But it was different at Arles. It seemed inconceivable, somehow, that in this huddled town of time-stained little houses, with their corner shrines and black gutter, there should be any life into which mine might ever penetrate; indeed, any life very different (for all the Socialist posters and politicians yelling all night at the Café du Forum) from that which during those crumbling, oozing centuries since

the fall of Rome, have left this place a dust-heap and a sewer-puddle. But the kind and frequently humorous Fates which preside over my wanderings have willed that even Arles should become, sooner or later, connected in my mind with impressions of friendship.

The way of it has been most curiously round-about, though efficacious. For what could seem less likely than that the recollections of my lonely day at Arles, of its avenue of tombs and general sepulchral character, should be corrected hundreds of miles away at Padua, and, of all places, in a butler's pantry? Yet it happened like that, and not eight days ago, and at the very moment I was beginning to put together these notes and was despairing at their gloominess. Moreover, it all hinges on those lines of Dante with which I have prefaced my remarks. For the friend I went to look for in that pantry, Luigi, most scholarly of courtly white-haired butlers, has the best reason for knowing lines of Dante, since he has translated (*monumentum aere perennius!*) the whole "Divine Comedy" into his native dialect. . . . So that, coming into his sacrarium, stuck round with various discarded photographs of places, I had no need

to keep my feelings to myself on recognizing, above the glasses and decanters and coffee-cups, the dismantled church and ruined belfry of the Aliscamps, the horned sarcophagi and the burying-troughs of the Pagan lying higgledy-piggledy under the trees. My mind flew back a year, out of the friendly pantry to that scirocco morning, to the yellowing leaves falling on to the dusty Provençal road, the belated sawing cicalas and the gigantic poisonous gnats, ghosts, no doubt, of evil-minded ancients buzzing round their sepulchres in that uncanny promenade.

"It is a photograph"—he answered my inquiries—"which Count Alberto had spoilt and thrown away. It seems a curious place, and I have often wondered where it is."

"Why, it is Arles. . . ."

"Arles?" cried he, laying down his duster and approaching—"you don't mean, signora, Arles *where the Rhone stagnates?*"

"Of course—don't you see?—'and the whole place is chequered over with tombs'—*fanno i sepolcri tutto 'l loco varo.*"

We were bending together over the photograph. "I will write that verse upon it, and

am infinitely indebted to you, signora," he said, "for telling me. Then Dante saw it!"

"Of course Dante saw it, hundreds of old stone coffins lying about in the fields. Dante saw it and wrote about it. And *I* saw it last October, Luigi. . . ."

But I desisted from adding, what, however, interested *me* very much, that I also was writing about it. . . .

The line of Dante now stands in neat pencil at the foot of that photograph in the pantry at Padua; and the friendly face and courteous gesture of the old butler fill up the empty space in my lonely recollection of the Aliscamps. Arles, henceforth, belongs no longer exclusively to a dreary, remote Middle Ages!

Little guessing this kind though tardy thoughtfulness of the Genius of Place on my behalf, I ended my stay at Arles with an accidental but most impressive last sight of the city. A mistake in the time had set me down at the station half an hour too soon. So, retracing my steps towards the town, I got on to a narrow quay of the Rhone, a semicircular stone embankment, flush almost with the water, and protecting the old houses,

corbelled and battlemented, from the river; old, old backs of houses, stained with centuries of dirt and with the fogs of this place "where the Rhone stagnates."

It swirls past, thick, in long twists and dimples of pale water, a boat or two stranded against the embankment; and, at a bend, the battered gargoyle monsters of a kind of little palace peering down into its melancholy flood. The sun had set unperceived, and the water took in its pallor faint rose and lilac tints. The old town looked tomb-like. Very fitly this river walk began with a thick hedge of green cypress; and as I travelled away in the deepening night, I noticed a group of cypresses, funereal in the flat, surrounding every little station along the line.

NYMPHS AND A RIVER GOD

PURBLIND people complain that there is not water enough in the Italian landscape; estimating streams, apparently, according to the boats you can float on, or the pounds of fish you can pull out of, them, rather than by the grace and waywardness of the in-dwelling nymphs, or the sacred and miraculous character of the river god. For Italy has nymphs and river gods; which, to me at least, seem quite as much to be desired as trout or punts; and there is water enough everywhere in its hilly regions to refresh the spirit, though perhaps not always, I admit it, to bathe the body. And such as are dissatisfied thereat had better not come to Italy, and may as well skip these pages.

I don't quite know what meaning the ancients attached to the wood *Nymphæum*, and I rather fear it meant some portion of their public baths. But to me the word has come into connection

with certain little places very peculiar, and which one meets often enough on these hill-sides. I have just found one, quite perfect, while riding up the steep paths from the Mugnone Valley to the Amphitheatre of Fiesole. There is a sharp turn of the lanes, and in a little widening between the olive-yards a brake of reeds, a circle of bushes, a matting of wet grass; and a little stream, winding down the hill, falls over a weir, a smooth sheet of limpid white water, losing itself in the grass, and going babbling and singing away through the tiny gorge, with the cypresses and tall bay trees marking its course, and the flaming leafless willows its resting-places.

This is a *Nymphæum*, a home of the nymphs, and I recognize it immediately as such. But what do I mean thereby? Do I imagine forms of maidens, brides or bridesmaids of rustic gods haunting the spot? Assuredly not; nor any human forms save an occasional peasant tilling the olive-yard. Yet I know it is the place of the nymphs, I feel their presence, though the nymphs are merely the white singing water, the whispering brake of reeds; not immanent in it all, but *it, itself.* Certainly it is not merely

so much stone, water, grass, or trees. And when, as often happens, my pony stops in such places to drink of the shallow brook which crosses the path, I have a very special feeling as of being in an open-air chapel, a consecrated place; and it is all summed up in that misapplied word, the *Nymphæum*.

I have mentioned this kind of feeling, because it explains that it was something stronger even than the three immortal hexameters of Virgil, with Carducci's four or five beautiful strophes added to them, which drove me to brave the snow-wind along those miles of Umbrian valley in accomplishment of that long-desired pilgrimage to the sacred springs of the Clitumnus. It was a very fine, very cold March morning, a few round clouds rising and being chased along the snowy mountains. An austere country, and naturally wintry, this great high-lying oval valley or ancient lake-bottom of Umbria: mountains all round, rounded and without much grace, but very solemn in their deep blue powdered with snow; towns appearing and disappearing with every fitful light upon their flanks and spurs; their crops backward, hedges leafless, and bare

their sparse trees ; oaks, always and only oaks, except the olives here and there quite thin on the grey parched rubble of the hillsides. Very solemn ; not tragic, but almost more than austere. A country, moreover, very scanty of people ; few farms, and only one real village to pass through in all those miles ; decent but poor, with a great turreted castle in its midst, turned into barns ; and a church with a fresco on the door, surrounded by last year's faded garlands. The people also, without Tuscan ease or Roman swagger, silent and serious ; men on pack-horses or driving strings of mules ; women spinning with the distaff while herding the sheep and black pigs in the thin frost-bitten grass. And at intervals, from every hillside, great runs of torrent rubble, avalanches of stone ; and in them, untouched or unheeding, the great bare oaks in scattered companies, with only tufts of black hellebore at their feet. It was sunny by fits, and very cold. What a solemn, solemn country, this vast, flat, oval valley of green crops, swept by the wind and snow from the mountains, and burnt by the sun, and devastated by the torrents ; and yet fertile, and human, and serene !

Nymphs and a River God

I had seen that little temple of the Clitumnus, under the rocky, towered hill, and above the full, lush stream, very often, from the train, which passes it without stopping; it is an accidental arrangement of suggestions and lines so perfect as to have haunted one for years, even had one not known the name and the verses. And now at last I got to it. The little temple stands on a rock above a mill turned by the Clitumnus. Looked at from near, it is evidently made up out of remains of a much larger building, and in Byzantine times, with carved cross and vines; it is, in fact, a Christian church. But, built of Roman fragments, with its gable and entablature, its two fluted columns and little vestibule between them, 'tis the most classic and pagan place I have ever seen. One is quite surprised, inside the tiny temple *cella*, to find upon the altar the usual framed printed forms, "Sacerdos quum lavat manus," etc., and one somehow translates this Christian rite into an antique lustration. Pigeons live untidily all over the temple, and between its two columns I found the body of a finch, with that decent look which dead birds have. Under the temple, as

I have said, and passing through a mill, flows the Clitumnus: unsullied by the women who wash in it, a shallow stream of pellucid water, the great weeds waving in its whiteness like naiads' hair; the banks green, with here and there a weeping willow, faintly green, and a rosy peach-tree doing it honour in this blossomless country. An inscription tells that the place was sacred to the Clitumnian Jove, or to Jove as the Clitumnus — *Jovi Clitumno*. The Latin leaves it impressively ambiguous.

One must do like Turner, and transfer in the picture painted and cherished by one's fancy the little temple from above this mill-reach to about a mile off along the same road, to the springs of the river; and one must think of it as guarding the very height and perfection of this lovely water, its miraculous well-head. Under the road, under an arid rock, sparsely grown with bare oaks, lies a pond half surrounded by the buildings and little garden of a farm, encroached on by the green and watery grass, and guarded towards the plain by tall hedges and a screen of budding poplars. A little island, green also with fresh weeping

willows, is in the midst. And this pond is the well-head of the Clitumnus. Out of the rock, invisibly, heaven knows how, issue swift streams of purest white water, winding among the cress, the wild mint, and the grasses. And out of deep holes (as if a tree had been uprooted) bubble more waters, pellucid, pale beryl-coloured; and more well up, pure blue among the waving tresses of weeds, effervescing on the surface. Never was such water elsewhere! Straight from the hidden naiads' urns, gushing upwards among the unexpected grass and reeds and trees under that stony hill. A woman who was filling her pitcher, and who gave me to drink, told me it never lessens, but rather the contrary, in the greatest summer droughts. Some peasants were shoeing a handsome mule at the forge by the brink; and two lovely bullocks, purest white Val di Chiana breed, worthy of Virgil and of the Roman triumphs on the Capitol, were waiting to be yoked. I had felt, while sitting in the sunshine by the temple, that it, and the stream, and the bleak blue valley, were consecrated for me by those lines of the Georgics. But now, seeing the springs, I understood that there were things

more wonderful and venerable than all Virgil's poetry, the places which had inspired it; and that I was in the home of a God, in a real God's presence.

BRIVE-LA-GAILLARDE

I AM very glad that friend of mine induced me to go out of my way to Brive, although nothing could have been more different from what, Heaven only knows why, I had made up out of her few words about the place.

And here I would note the way in which a friend, by the mere fact of having recently been there, can keep company with us, despite all difficulties of time and space, in what would otherwise be quite new and solitary places. Thus with this particular friend of mine, the arch-traveller: how often have I trodden in her footsteps! Last spring it was at Viterbo, amidst the magic of fruit blossom and of trickling fountains, the melancholy fascination of those ivory basilicas among the dismantled walls, the forsaken fields, of Toscanella: a word left on a scrap of paper on the inn table bringing the bare knowledge that the other had been

there, that her eyes, her feet, had been on those stones; that her thoughts had gone out, like mine, to meet these things. This time it is in autumn showers, in the hilly heart of France that I have been thus companioned; companioned, who knows, perhaps more fully and truly almost than many a time that we have travelled side by side in the body. For our truer friendships give into our power an essence, as it were, of the personality—a real presence distilled from all we care for really—glance, gesture, tone of voice, turn of the head, curl of the hair, and individual, inexpressible ways of feeling and seeing things; all of which remains ours (if we know how to use it reverently), inalienably ours, happen what may, and companions us, as I said, on occasion. I felt this thing, and was befriended yesterday evening on coming to the nice balconied Hôtel de Bordeaux (where Kings of Spain and Pope Pius VII. had halted, as inscriptions told me), and while as yet Brive-la-Gaillarde meant nothing to me except a starry night, big trees all round, some roses at my window, and a vague sense of approaching the South.

Meant, let me hasten to correct, nothing

connected with the reality. For I saw Brive quite well before getting there, and see it quite distinctly, as its exists in my fancy, alongside of the other Brive painted in my memory. The Brive I had come to see rises in a broken-off amphitheatre above a deep ravine, which is spanned, with its torrent, by a great viaduct; a long *mail* of elms looks down into the gulf, and the town is piled behind, rows of Louis XIV. hotels and of more modest "vieille France" houses whitewashed and silvery-roofed. And, in a dainty way, with the smart swagger of an old impregnable fortress turned to the prosperous uses of peace, it lives up to its name of La Gaillarde. And the autumn sun makes it whiter, the first autumn cloudiness turns its slate into pure silver.

That is *my* Brive; and a very good place it is, and one I shall keep in my dreams till the day I find it, perchance, in the Kingdom of Heaven. The unexpected in the business is not so much that the real Brive should have turned out wholly different; first of all just as flat as a town can well settle down to be in the midst of a hilly country, and neither fortified-looking, nor white, nor — Heaven save the

mark !—dainty nor prosperous, nor in the least "vieille France" as I understand those words. This utter difference from the place of my imagining is not the unexpected ; but rather that, given this utter difference, I should not have been disappointed, but quite, quite the reverse.

It was raining on and off, and more on than off ; and I wandered under my umbrella past the great plane trees which have replaced, as is usual in France, the city walls and moat ; and on along the muddy cobbles of the tortuous streets. And as I walked into Brive-la-Gaillarde I understood at once, I scarce knew why, that the bit of journey in the dark yesterday—the hillsides covered with chestnuts, the rushing torrents, the long tunnels after Limoges—had brought me not only into the mountains (I could see their green sloping pastures between the roofs of Brive) but also in great measure into the South. For here was that almost inevitable mark of the South : not the squalor only—and there was a more than Southern dose of that—but the South's—at least the historic Southern town's—tragic look, its air of having lost its children and refusing to be consoled.

Brive-la-Gaillarde

In Northern countries—England, Germany, Switzerland, and what I have hitherto thought of as France—the Past may remain as a thing of peace and prosperity. But in the South, with few exceptions, there is always the trace of a wrench, a catastrophe, a sudden lamentable breaking-off (monuments and institutions hanging rag-like); or else the crumbling of long periods of slow depression; a mournful *no* to life. I understood the Southernness of Brive as much in this characteristic as in the carts dragged no longer by horses but by thin red cows (straw wreathing the creatures' horns in a Bedlam fashion), and in the hard peaches and figs and mushrooms on to which the rain was descending in the market-place. The South is in those tortuous streets, where, ever and anon, a bit of tracery, a row of Romanesque heads, as off some church front, or even a lovely double-arched window of Siennese pattern, is built up into a sordid house. The South is in the big yellow Romanesque church, all corners and porches outside and all dark chapels and apses inside—of Romanesque which never, never can flower into Gothic, however much its round arches squeeze into horseshoe, and its piers stilt

themselves against the ceiling. A Southern, mournful church, believed in and neglected, damp, dark, and stained, into which (a circumstance always impressive) you go down steps instead of up—a descent into long ago. The market, the booths and umbrellas and carts in the rain, spread all round it ; men in blouses and sabots, and women in caps ; for Brive, though already the South, is still France. And in this mixture, perhaps because it is the first time I meet it, lies the charm of La Gaillarde. It is not at all an Italian city (or even village !) of past magnificence, civic or tyrannical. It is French, very French, and thoroughly provincial. Its houses, although (in the smaller streets, at least, and the black alleys and courts) festooned with vines in trellis-fashion, are high, slate-roofed ; many of them are wooden, projecting bulgy sides into the street ; and every here and there you meet a pepper-pot tower, a corkscrew turret-stair, and pointed cock-eyed attics.

Nothing remains at Brive of the early Middle Ages, save that one melancholy twelfth-century church ; a town probably nipped in the bud, blasted in the great catastrophe of Southern France ; and then ruined once more during

the wars of Religion. At least this inner town, which was once inside the walls, walls the seventeenth century—Richelieu, as usual—evidently pulled down, planting the avenues of planes in the filled-up moat. Then the better-to-do folk, during that brief prosperity of early Louis XIV. which rebuilt so much of France, set those boulevards with handsome little hotels, *mansarded* and *œil de bœuf'd*, but now very sad in their turn among the little gardens. And meanwhile inside the town the little fifteenth-century castellated houses in yards and lanes became, no doubt, little *châteaux de la misère;* and thus on, absenteeism and taxes helping, the town dwindling, dying, on till the Revolution. . . .

The historical emotion had me in its grip; I thought that I wanted a history of Brive. But once inside the bookshop I desisted from asking for one, feeling I knew the melancholy tale quite poignantly enough. The Brive booksellers (for there are two) are guiltless of the usual display of aphrodisiac yellow backs. They are decorous warehouses of ready-reckoners, *ménagères modèles*, manuals of etiquette, and gilt-edged aids to devotion, and do

business mainly in copybooks and *faire-parts*. But in one of them I found a shelf full of cheap classics, and I felt I positively must possess one as a souvenir of Brive. I hankered after a Montaigne or some sixteenth-century tattered satirist; I would have liked a "Capitaine Fracasse," or even a "Trois Mousquetaires," for those hungry swashbucklers might have hailed from this place. . . . At last I found a "Manon Lescaut," uncut, but stained with damp. I bought it. Of course, it is not of the same date as Brive. But it has the God-forsakenness, the *misère*, the penetrating sadness, its essentially French charm. For the charm of poor Brive-la-Gaillarde, its melancholy grace, is very great.

OF PARIS AND THE EXHIBITION

THE third day I simply struck, refused point-blank to enter the Exhibition, and taking a cab where the colossal Parisienne presides over its gates (Parisienne quotha! Why, she is only one part tryer-on at the Printemps, and two parts spurious Indian idol or archæological sham Astarte) I had myself set down in regions still unshaken by the motor-car, and where no cry of "*tiquettes*" breaks upon the song of salad vendor and of *vitrier*. Far along the quays, near the Wine Market, where I plunged into an unexpected little black Gothic church, and willingly lost myself in a maze of narrow streets, with washball and cabbage water streaming down their sides. Behind the windows, the meagre geraniums, young women were ironing print frocks; students in barbaric hats and workmen in peg-top trousers were dining on the pavement; and white house-painters,

and whiter cook-boys like Watteau Pierrots, and *bonnes* and widow ladies in black, and even (in the Rue de la Parcheminerie, for instance) cocks and hens, were all a leisurely bustle in the greyish-blue atmosphere, against that greyish-white background, touched with the vivid orange and cobalt of posters, which all of it means Paris. Means it at least to me, and, I should think, to every one who cares for real places and hates shams, and—well, and exhibitions.

It is not the utilitarian side of the Exhibition which offends me, far from it; there is an element of life, and therefore of possible future grace or dignity, in everything useful, if it is really so, and not mere lumber and complication. I respect all machines, for instance, hoping they may some day perfect themselves into their own minimum, or, so to speak, their own negation. And I wish some capable person had explained them to me, or rather that I had been a person capable of grasping their explanation. I do not mind even the gross and animal side of the Exhibition, the endless eating and drinking, which is its sole serious feature, if only people would be less grimly anxious and fiercely active

about securing tables, or a little better pleased with their food once they have got it. I do not really hate all the various vulgar *divertissements* so long as any one is diverted; and I can even hope that it is not merely horrid covetousness, but in some simple breasts a vague fairy-story wonder which gathers the sordid multitudes round the cases of diamonds and rubies and emeralds. People distil the poetry needful for healthy life out of many and very different things, and most appeals to the imagination are, after all, better than nothing.

What vexes me in the Exhibition is precisely that by which it appeals in vain, so to speak, to *me*. There is a certain impressiveness in the thought that the Past, as well as the Distant, have sent their wares to be exhibited. But there is not much real pleasure to be squeezed out of time and space as such; and then it turns out to be mere rhetoric, and just on a par with the sham Kremlins, and cardboard St. Marks, and block-tin Meccas, and all the other dreary frauds. One catches one's self wandering in fancy from the pale Morte d'Arthur tapestries and Byzantine enamels of the Retrospective show to remote provincial cathedrals, and forlorn

little churches on mountain-side or brink of salt marsh, their real, fitting abode ; and when it comes to the glass case in the Spanish department, containing the relics of poor Boabdil el Chico, one could cry at this last outrage reserved for the King of Granada, and feels one's own heart and fancy stripped and sent into exile like the poor nice Moors. For those things, torn banners, and damascened sword, and pathetic frayed coat with its crimson pomegranates, have come by rail alongside of dry goods and ironmongery.

This, however, is not the worst. It is the disregard to all sense of geography implied in the gazebos of the Rue des Nations (let alone disregard to all other decent feeling in bringing over savages to stare at) ; the disregard for all those circumstances of climate, soil, vegetation, lie of the land and history which constitute the organic habit of countries and the organic reason of places and monuments, making them into living creatures, charming friends, or venerable divinities. It is, to me, of course, this stupid wicked carnival sacrilege towards the *Genius Loci*. . . . And yet, as some writers tell us about Torquemada and similar personages of

tender religious sensibility, I am aware that at the bottom of the wrath that burns in me, and would like to burn in and all through that Rue des Nations, there is nothing but infinite sadness and pity. Yes ; in good earnest, and without irony or rhetoric or nonsense of any kind, a sense of great sadness for what all this points to : the incapacity, in ninety-nine out of every hundred quite human contemporaries, of extracting any interest save self-interest from their everyday surroundings, of distilling any imaginative charm out of their own life ; the absence of all that is spectacular or lovely or significant in their own thoughts and feelings ; and the consequent necessity to pile up, mostly in vain, tremendous artificial and far-fetched follies in the dull landscape of their existence.

Siberia and Java ! the Tombs of Mycenæ and furniture of Potsdam ! What good can they get from it all if they cannot see the difference between the lie of the land at Fontainebleau and at Compiègne ; if it is nothing to them where the sand and the vineyards of the Ile de France end and the chalk and the apple trees of Normandy begin ? Why, even in this centralized France, every district, I feel

convinced, has some variation of shape of cart or harness, of fold and sit of starched cap ; and as to Paris, why, everything, or almost everything, which has been made by man and time and not by machinery, possesses a grace, an amusing turn, a something telling of the centuries and the weather, and telling above all of its own particular private means and ways, from the flying buttresses of Notre Dame to the long carts, with cranks and levers, on which the great blue-fleeced horses draw the barrels along from the Halle aux Vins.

That brings me back to my expedition of, so to speak, purification after too much exhibition. I had an even better one, a pilgrimage to the spirit in-dwelling in the Left Bank, quite accidentally a few days later. We went first to an old house, Louis XIV., with great yard for coaches and garlanded portal, in the Rue Garancière, and then on. But I ought to explain that one of the charms of the Left Bank, one of the things which make it so particularly Paris, is its being a great alluvium and accretion of the in-streaming provinces, containing samples of every provincial town, of every sort of provincial life, even of the seclusion and silence

thereof alongside of its own noisy thoroughfares. The particular house we went to see, with a view to hiring for a nurse's school, that afternoon was a little old hotel in the Rue Vanneau, uninhabited for months, and seemingly years, full of dust and cobwebs, and yet quite dainty and decorously cheerful; behind it the big trees and half-wild bushes of a neglected garden. An old lady and gentleman (who? whence?) were taking the air on the steps of this utterly dismantled abode. The last inhabitants had been some Pères Bénédictins; and on the mantelpiece of the empty lodge lay an old newspaper address of Sa Grandeur the Bishop of Hebron, or Antioch, or Tyre.

O Paris of the Left Bank, the only real Paris for me, with thy stately hotels and long convent walls overtopped with discreet green; thy frowzy little Balzac pensions, tenanted once by the nymphs of Farmers-General, and now by enthusiastic art students and warlike doctoresses, and widows from the provinces leading bowing sons in check cravats; Paris of Faisan d'Ors where we hoped in the *plat du jour* and hesitated between gratuitous blue wine and another, not gratuitous, *demie-cannette*; Paris of crêmeries,

wherein we cheated the desire for afternoon tea, and many, doubtless, thought to cheat desire for dinner or lunch; Paris of history, of romance, Dumas and Balzac, of hope and effort and day-dreams also, Socialists, and scientific struggling girls of Rosny's novels, and ardent expatriated creatures fit for Henry James! I felt it was the only real Paris, as I stood (having left behind the civilized cosmopolitan boulevards), at the window of a certain fourth floor near the Invalides, overlooking clipped trees and Louis XIV. attics, with, in the smoky sunset distance, a faint babel of Exhibition towers and domes. And to think that I, even *I*, could have thought, even for a second, that I had come to Paris to see the Rue des Nations!

TRENT

HOW strange it seemed, and yet how delightfully right, early that morning, to be once more in the South ; to be going no longer in a omnibus to an inn, but rattling and jingling behind postillion harnesses up to this hospitable house ! How very lovely and delicate Trent looked as we drove through ; not picturesque, like those old German towns behind me, but much better, *beautiful*, with its fine Venetian windows of fifteenth and sixteenth century work, its remains of fresco, its Lombard Cathedral all pillareted ; its porticoes and squares where the baskets of grapes and mushrooms were being unloaded, and the walls and towers with Ghibelline swallow-tails, with the Adige rushing past them to Verona. And how pleasant it was, once outside the city, along the dusty roads of the valley and the steep mountain track up to this castle, to meet white oxen

drawing up carts of new wine, not on ladder waggons as in South Germany and Switzerland, but on those carts like old-fashioned artillery trains, waspwaists studded with nails, and almost spokeless wheels, which belong to all Lombardy, and which tell one that the Alps are behind and nothing in front but wide descending valleys and the great plain of the Po, until you get to the Apennines.

How much pleasure Germany has just given me, I thought; as we jingled along through that border country, where officials speak German and Nature speaks Italian; and how much pleasure Italy is going to give me once more!

One should be grateful for, and cherish, the very differences in the kind of pleasure, the way of giving it, which different countries have. Thus, in Germany (save in some large cosmopolitan towns of no account for local sentiment) I am a stranger, knowing no inhabitants, and moving from inn to inn; not in the least solitary (far from it), but companioned only by effigied Götz von Berlichingen knights out of Franconian churches, and candid adventurers, and sensitive eccentric fine ladies, and ballad-

singers, and "advocates of the poor," and mysterious abbés and beautiful souls out of Goethe's and Jean Paul's novels and Stilling's autobiography; by nurses and teachers almost —alas! as past and imaginary—and my father's shooting companions out of my own childhood; companioned also, in the way in which they only companion, by immortal tunes. And without any disrespect to whatever dear living German friends Fortune may hold in reserve for me (their vague images, guessed at behind turret casements in rough-paved towns, or behind gates, shadowed by lime trees, of steep-roofed country houses, are perhaps the most unreal members of my whole imaginary escort!) without, assuredly, any disrespect to future German realities, I think that this kind of solitude or sociability (for it is both) is perhaps what fits in best with Germany and German sentiment. But it is quite different with Italy. *That* is the land of friends, real, living, and incomparable; and their simplicity and gravity and fantastic humour, their impetuous graciousness and grace, their indefinable quality of ancient race and local breeding, are required for the full appreciation of the greatness of their

history, the genius and charm of their art, as much as the unbroken family tradition, the love of district and town, which is revealed in their everyday talk.

So that sojourn in an inn, so proper in Germany, affects me as rather against nature in Italy, as a loss and a grievance ; and it seemed so very right that this really Italian town of Trent should make me happy in real Italian fashion. Up here in the castle, high among woods of mixed northern beech and southern pine among the rocks, with its great rooms frescoed by the Fuggers for Charles V.'s stay, and now more worthily inhabited by babies and dolls and rocking-horses ; up here, as last year down in the palace at Trent, I felt at once in touch, through this friendly present, with the past. In half an hour, during a meal among the family portraits—a Titian and a Moroni among them—one seemed to know not merely everything about the modern Trent, with its Italian inhabitants and Austrian garrison and officials, but also about the feudal Trent of the Council and before. The family of the Madruzzos, who held the Prince Bishopric for nearly a century, and owned so many castles, had

become quite real and familiar to me. And, turn about with possibility of mountain excursions (including reference to time-tables of railways and lake steamers), we found ourselves, quite naturally, calculating how many changes of horses must have been needed to carry the news from the Council to Rome, supposing, of course, that the messengers of Charles V. and Pope Farnese had galloped day and night.

Last year I stayed to see my friends in Trent itself. It was midsummer, during an interlude of stormy weather, which brought out the Alpine character of the place. In fine weather, towns situated like this one, like Bellinzona also, and Innsbruck, in the flat surrounded by high mountain walls, have something to me intolerably suggestive of a prison. But when the clouds hide these barriers with the rest of the world (the endless baffling of a great Alpine valley), these places have a grandeur, and even a special pleasantness in their apparent companionship with the elements. The rocks and forests and high pastures look down into them, the storms and snows play familiarly in these close quarters ; and here at Trent there is a little waterfall on an Alp, performing as unconcernedly

before the whole town as the spurts of water among the statues and traceries of the great fountain by the cathedral. It is pleasant to see this Alpine character recorded in a fresco on the outside of one of the fine fifteenth-century Venetian houses: the family are seated in a room with Oriental rugs, before a wide window letting in the sunset and the mountains, drawing them into intimacy.

The first evening I passed at Trent itself (as distinguished from this castle above it) the Alps seemed to close down on it with their storms; and one wondered whether the Adige, big with melted snow, was not going, as it has so often done, to join in this over-familiar game of the elements with the city.

We made our way through dark streets rushing with water, and under waterfalls from the roofs, to the church containing the famous seventeenth-century organ, of which the chapel-master of the Lateran used to talk to me years and years ago. Some service connected with the Sacred Heart was going on, the church all hung with red damask, and a splendid altar blazing out of the darkness like a Christmas-tree. There were a good many people, despite

the frightful weather, all huddled in cloaks and shawls, and scarcely visible in the dark nave. A little hymn was played over and over again by the organ, and sung alternately by the congregation without accompaniment. The voices, mainly women and boys, had that deep, guttural quality one gets to know and love in Italian fields, solemn and with a pathos which strikes one as primæval. The little organ, on the other hand, was infinitely mellow, like a small band of old stringed instruments, a sort of Cremona among organs itself. We stayed till the last repetition of the beautiful old hymn-tune, and went away, when the sermon began, out into that mountain storm raging through the streets. It was curious to remember that this was the church where the great Council had sat to remake or to mar Catholicism, the rows and rows of silver mitres which Titian has painted, or one of his pupils.

THE MOTOR-CAR AND THE GENIUS OF PLACES

I

THEY took me yesterday a long drive in their motor-car along the Hog's Back, through Guildford, Dorking, and a score of other places, all of which I do not much believe in. Still, there is in the scenery of Southern England something which greatly harmonizes this improbable mode of locomotion, and tempers into mere comfortable dreaminess that sense of unreality, of "not having been there," which it is apt to leave in the old-fashioned votary of the Genius of Places. No rapidity of movement can disconcert the slow, poetic prose of this dear country; and you seem to turn over its village gardens and willowed streams, and little churches among elms, and old-world inns with swinging signs, and lovers in the lane, or children on the green, like so

many pictures in a Caldecott or Greenaway book, with an amused and pleasant feeling of leisure. And the lie of the land is similarly reassuring.

The furthest distances are gathered neatly together, blue fold on blue fold, against the green hemlock fringe of the high-lying roads, with no mountain or sea suggestion of other lands beyond; no distant steeples or towers suggestive of distant past, of life less peaceful than that of the toy country towns, with plum and apricot roofs among the tree-tops. Nay, the very sky, with which the motor's unimpeded rushing brings you into curious new relation, broods over it all with a sheltering intimacy shutting out the very thought of foreign lands.

A drive like this one through a very familiar and prosperous country makes one understand, if not the imaginative value, at all events the moral mission, of the motor-car in the future; in the future, of course, when it will be a thing of honourable utility, not swagger, and within the reach of many. For instead of travelling, like irresponsible outlaws, imprisoned between fences and embankments, it takes us into the streets and on to the roads where people are moving

about naturally; it makes us slacken and deflect for waggons and go-carts, nay, stop short, decently, for children and dogs, feeling the claims of other life than ours, and suggesting that remote districts and foreign lands are not our tea-gardens and racecourses; for I fear that railways have merely diminished the sense of enlarged brotherhood which should come from reasonable travel. Moreover, the motor-car will remove the degradation of being conveyed like cattle or luggage, irresponsible and unresponsive; and will reinstate the decorous sense of mystery connected with change of place. The place I was in recedes, vanishes; the one I am in slips away as I speak; and the hospitable distance approaches and unfurls to receive me; and I am full of wonder and regret and gladness.

These are the moral advantages which the motor-car will bring. It has, also, its very special appeals to the fancy and the feelings. Apart from the rapture of mere swift movement, which I neither feel nor regret not feeling (there are so many possible exhilarations in life without verging on drunkenness), is the sense of triumph over steepness, flying uphill with the ease we are accustomed to only in

rushing down: the effort against weight, abolished not merely in ourselves, but in the thing which carries us. Then, particularly in flat or widespread counties, the unaccustomed speed enables one to see as wholes tracts of land too large to be taken in at any ordinary pace; and even more, tracts of sky. A certain great elliptical pattern of clouds, shaped like the rounds of feathers of the sawed marble slabs of St. Mark's would, for instance, have been invisible had we been traversing the Roman Campagna at a foot's pace or the trot of a horse. And there is, in the swishing over tiresome details, in the abolition of the—"Oh, here's another piece of boring straight road!" something most strangely like thought or desire. If beggars could ride (reversing the old saw) wishes would be nowadays not horses, but motors.

As regards the feeling for localities, the motor heightens not the sense of topography (which is, if anything, sacrificed), but the great geographical one. The ins and outs of a group of hills, their various slopes and levels and wide shelving valleys, and the reaching inwards of the plain among the mountain roots; the whole

real shape of the earth's surface, and the complexities of its ways, all this is revealed as you swish past. Revealed rather than realized. To such as me, at least. Probably because I cannot grasp things so quickly, cannot give them the warmth, the fulness of a reality which has picked up and knotted afresh the fibres of one's heart. In motoring things remain ocular, mere visions, unaccompanied by the sympathizing measuring of our muscles and will. They lack the tangible joy, working deep into our nerves, of the massive real. On coming back to Rome after that couple of hours in the mountains I could remember, could see, those hillsides delicately fringed with palest still rosy leaf against the background of lilac distance, of high Apennine snow above the far-off blue. And those high-lying shallow valleys, deep meadows twisting and feathering off into spirals of fresh-leaved trees; those steep green banks fringed at the top with pine, where stands the so-called tomb of Cicero, a round, contemplating watch-tower; or, I would rather it were, the tomb of Lucretius, meditating eternities. . . . I saw it all—see it all even now—clearly enough in my mind's eye. But lacking the

corroborating evidence of my limbs, or of any movement I have learned to time against my limbs' movements, these things remain *seen*, without the ineffable sense of having been there, or of its having been in me. Had I been there indeed? I remember the sort of doubt with which I returned on that occasion. There was, moreover, a vague dissatisfaction: this couple of hours in the far-off places *had made too little difference in me.* I missed the sense of strangeness which brings with it so much refreshment and renovation. The dream-land had whirled past, leaving me, unlike the awakened dreamer in the fairy tale, without a pebble or a flower to attest its reality.

It seems, in a way, right that such should be the case; and one seems to guess at one of the underlying concordances of things, in the fact that such effortless seeing and knowing should lack the mark of complete possession working deep into the soul, which belongs to desires that struggle for their accomplishment. How poignantly, pathetically almost, we feel the lines and colours of the hills remaining for ever on the horizon! What a nostalgic fondness, as for the unattainable past, we often

have for the twist of the valley, the reach of the river—nay, the very tuft of trees or pointing steeple just beyond the limits of our daily walk or ride!

But we want both kinds of locomotion—the limited and the limitless and effortless, by which I mean the motor-car, in answer to different kinds and phases of our feeling, and to the different quality of place and hour. The fleeting and intangible memories left by motoring suit certain alien localities and places of a dead and done-for past. They are fitting, moreover, for occasions of rapid meeting and parting, blotting out the how and why into insignificance, leaving the improbable, central moment to vacillate in the memory: was it, or not?

Short of such sentimental facts (which one can't help imagining) I can conceive no greater contrast, nor one more illustrative of the special quality of motoring, than yesterday's drive in and out of South-Country villages (I have remarked how the intimate character of that scenery diminishes the dream-like nature of this form of locomotion) and a similar motor drive, quite recent, back from Versailles at the close of a long, hot day.

The Enchanted Woods

Evening had come on in the absolute solitude and stillness of the Trianon park; extraordinarily silent, breathless, between the hornbeam hedges and round the ponds dark and shining like bronzed water-lily leaves; the water, like the air, like the dim trees, reduced to the condition of a ghost. No sound save an occasional wood-pigeon. While we sat at dinner by the window, a street-singer had set to lamenting below, and a tall house become suddenly preternaturally white in the waning day and the electric light among the trees; bringing, as such emblems of passingness always do in places of brief sojourn, a little pang to the heart. It is always, somehow, that hour in this world, coming suddenly: the end of the day, the moment to part.

It was quite dark when we set out back to Paris. We rushed through the park of St. Cloud, which started into existence, though not reality, in the broad flare of the motor-car's lamps; the road appearing under our wheels, the trees coming into being as the light flashed up into their branches. No other mode of travel has ever given me so fantastic a sense of the real unreality of things, of their becoming only because we happen to see them. . . .

Avenues and wide places opening out of the darkness, and great ponds shining under the crescent moon; and, starting out of thickets, statues—tall, white, close at hand, gone as soon again. A minute later, issuing out of that uncertain place, the lights of Paris below us, the great illuminated wheel, the lit-up restaurants and bands among the lanterns and the trees, and the crowd of carriages. All gone equally. And what remains? The absurd, mournful quaver of the street-singer at Versailles; the noiseless sand of the park under foot; and that corner house suddenly grown white; and the sense of parting.

II

There sometimes comes the need for a *palinode*, so to speak, *of blame*; and this, after my previous praise, is my chapter of grievances against the motor-car, and, symbolically speaking, many other desirable and far-fetched things.

Perhaps my ill-humour came of the expedition savouring too much of the magician's flying carpet; for one does not expect to go a-motoring from Venice. Still, that crossing of the

lagoon, preliminary to the rest, was the most satisfactory part of it. Although not very early (and it is still almost summer) we found, immediately outside of Venice and its canals, a misty sea, in whose chilly whiteness the telegraph and semaphore posts tapered, as it were, into some uncertain north, bridging the way to England, Russia, America. . . . It made me understand, what I had never realized before, that the settling on the sand-banks of the lagoon was not some kind of embankment for Cythera, or gorgeous Turneresque picnic ("the sun of Venice going out to sea," and so forth), but a very sad and solemn matter, the poor refugees seeking not safety merely, but to become invisible almost on the surface of the foggy, unkind waters. The difference of seasons is perhaps greater in Italy than elsewhere ; even in Tuscany I know hillside farms and villas which, commonplace and smiling in May or June, become in winter the very symbol of forlorn bleakness. And, similarly, knowing the lagoon only in summer, I did not realize, until this misty morning, what that lacustrine life of earliest Venice must have meant, what toil and hardship. I was grateful for that knowledge, as one should be, methinks,

for any moment of chastened feeling in the hours of pleasure-seeking, since in this matter of motor-cars . . .

But let me first tell my gratitude to the mountains, after these weeks of Venice, and to the river Piave which issues out of them into the Plain of Treviso. I had caught sight of it years ago, driving under Asolo, with the kind, graciously whimsical lady whose name Mr. Browning has for ever connected with that place. And I had never forgotten that immense river-bed of palest lilac or rosy-white shingle, with the pellucid blue Alpine streams dividing it; white villages, steepled as in Giorgione's backgrounds, on its wooded banks; and the portals of the great mountains, a storm of dark blue blocking them, from which it all issues: river and landscape and fresh romantic life.

You go into those foothill valleys of Asolo with singular suddenness, and leave them in a manner more complete and astonishing still; leave them as one goes out of a house or house's room, returning to the weary plain of scorched vineyards and grey canals and endless avenues of plane-trees. Green valleys incredibly romantic; grass, just touched with

crocus, of vivid, unlikely emerald green; and sweeping chestnuts; and brooks among the red stones. And, above the hedges of hornbeam, sugarloaf hills, each with its towered villa or steepled church, white on the greenness. I recognized them all; remembering those drives, long ago, when the talk was of Mr. Browning, while our hostess's restless little dogs ran up and down and across us, as she said, "as if we were landscapes——"

I was tired and depressed when the motor stopped snorting and whirring in the little town of Asolo. And going into that house, waiting in that glazed-in loggia, with Mr. Browning's clavichord and everything else unchanged, and the vines yellowing once more against the distant blue landscape; the feeling of the dead and done-for past rose up with every bit of furniture, every line of hills which leapt back into my consciousness. So much seemed dead besides that poor charming, kindly lady and her tiresome, restless dogs.

And when I joined my new friends in the piazza, and we loitered about looking for picturesque or funny details, there was something almost shocking in the irresponsible way

in which the best of us will turn over with idle fingers, poke with boot tip or umbrella, sights which, to some one, surely, must mean lost years and heartache. I felt the full profanity of such making of the worship of the *Genius Loci* into watching quaint processions, christenings, or funerals, on to which we snap, at least in spirit, our Kodak. . . . I felt ungrateful to the motor. Nay, it seemed to me, this time, but another device for wasting the kernel of things and filling ourselves with their voluminous husks, and one of the practical ironies which wait on privilege of all kinds.

Certain it is that what remains clearest in this day's recollections, rather than the landscapes we whirled into and out of, were the faces, enviously gaping or angry, of the people we scattered along the road. It is not good, I am afraid, dear friends, to scatter people along roads and cover them with the dust of our wheels ; there is a corresponding scattering of our soul, and a covering of *it* with dust. The spirit of places, scared on this occasion, had taken us by the hand, invisible but so present, that other time, when we lingered near the rope-walk at Chioggia, trying not to disturb

the children's attention, or picking our way upon the sea-wall, so as not to interrupt the maize-winnowing.

Those endless roads between the sedgy canals and the plane-trees, of the level land of Treviso, took gravity and beauty as we rushed back along them in the dusk. And at this hour, the hurtle of the motor, which had offended me in the earlier part of the day, turned into a solemn swiftness, evocative of serious thoughts, of ghosts almost, as the lantern light ran along the leaves overhead, and the long, white Venetian houses arose and disappeared in the blue night.

At Mestre there was a fair going on; a merry-go-round by the water's edge, yellow and red lights among the trees and in the long, shivering ripples of the canal. And when we had left the motor, and were once more in the launch, slowly gliding between the dark banks into the pale moon mist of the lagoon, I think we all of us, fortunate and privileged creatures, felt as if sky and water, and lights and shadowy barges, and half-lit houses and the miles of scenery we had rushed through, had done nothing but fill our empty souls with unspeakable, unreasonable sadness, brimful, overflowing.

THE ILEX WOODS AND THE ANCHORITES

I UNDERSTOOD at last, in those Umbrian ilex woods, why, all through the winter, I had never been able to see the snowstorms break over Vallombrosa, the blue mountain depths, the white distant snows, the solemn beetling clouds, without thinking about hermits, about anchorites. The words used to rise up in my mind regularly every time. I remarked them to myself, and returned home, to forget them till the next wintry ride above my house.

The ilex woods of Umbria, so black, compact, mysterious, used always to attract me on the old journey (by Perugia and the Valley of the Nera) from Florence to Rome; and I can remember the kind of pleasant terror which filled me when, on one such journey in my

childhood, the train stopped without apparent reason in one of their precipitous defiles. But I never got in among the ilexes till some years ago, while staying at Foligno, and they came upon me almost as a surprise this early spring at Spoleto.

The ilex woods above Foligno were those surrounding the ancient abbey of Sassovivo. You scramble up into hills of that lovely red roan limestone, brightening here and there into pure carnation colour, of which these Umbrian towns, Assisi, Spello, Foligno, Trevi, are all built; bleak hills thinly furred over with sere oak scrub and dry heather, of which the woodmen were making faggots that rolled and bounded down into the torrent beds. You continue up and into the mountain; the ilex woods begin; and in them, suddenly, you come upon the half-ruined Cistercian monastery, with its fortified walls and towers and pillareted cloister, and its creviced belfry with a juniper bush growing alongside of the weather vane. Some charcoal-burners' mules were grazing with the sheep under the thinned ilexes; grazing the thyme and the myrrh scented grey herbs among the loose, rosy stones. The wind was blowing

keen, and white cloud balls moving over the valley and the distant blue hills; it was an austere, wild place, oddly primeval, which made one feel, even under the monastery towers, that this was the old Umbria of before Roman days, its forests cut indeed to scrub, but sprouting still from the ancient roots. I broke a twig of ilex to take home, and kept it many months in my study; the leaves turned into brittle black silver. That was my first close acquaintance with the Umbrian ilex woods.

I don't know whether there have ever been any hermits in these woods of Sassovivo, though I like to think of them there before the monks came; but I know, for St. Jerome mentions it, that the "Mountain" of Spoleto was full of them. A place full of hermits sounds, literally taken, a contradiction in terms. But it is not the case. The pleasant thing about my anchorites is that they were quite alone—*really* alone, as children would put it—and at the same time not at all solitary. You have the proof of it in a great many early frescoes, and in a most instructive picture of the Hermits of the Thebais, by, I think, one of the Lorenzetti. There they all are, within

a stone's-throw of each other, each in a little pink house of his own, with his own belfry, his own well, garden, rocks, and his own, *his very own* demons coming to tempt him. It is the ideal of *very ownness*, for there is always somebody to whom you can show how alone you are.

The same impression is left by Fra Domenico Cavalca's "Lives of the Fathers of the Desert." I call it Cavalca's, because I cannot but think that this charming fourteenth-century monk must have allowed himself great liberties in translating from St. Jerome, St. Athanasius, and from their Latin translator, Evagrius, a clerk of Antioch, all of whom sound grim enough. Certain it is that Cavalca's hermits are quite delightfully sociable. It is true that one of them lived on the top of an inaccessible rock for the space of fifty years, never admitting any person to his dwelling. But even he had appointed days on which he conversed from his window with all such strangers as were desirous of instruction or comfort. And even another one, about whom there is a controversy whether the place he inhabited was a dry cistern or a hollowed-out gourd, and should be parsed

"Syricumbam vocant" or "Syri gumbam vocant," even this adaptable person seems to have seen a good deal of company. For that is the peculiarity of your anchorite, that even when he settles at a good three days' journey in the wilderness, and in a Syricumba or gumba so-called by Syrians, the whole population of large towns streams out to call on him. I pass over in silence those bands of ladies with lutes and timbrels whom the later frescoes show us as gracefully intruding on the leisure of the hermits; and even over the tame lions and she-wolves and the centaurs and fauns with whom these holy men picked up acquaintance along the way. The fact is that these lives of anchorites of Cavalca are simply steeped in the most charming sentimental sociability. Half the legends are stories of romantic friendships, journeys to meet "unknown friends," but with a tenderness far more graceful on the part of these greybeards than anything we read of eighteenth-century "beautiful souls." Take, for instance, the case of St. Paul, the proto—or, we might say, *premier*—hermit, to whom a chapel and a tiny house are dedicated in the Spoleto ilex woods. He was a sort of religious

Robinson Crusoe ; for, flying from persecution, he found ready made a beautiful cave at the foot of a most beautiful hill, with a palm and a spring at hand ; and close by the anvils and hammers and other useful properties of a band of coiners, who had hidden in that desert "in the days of Antony and Cleopatra." Now, it so happened that St. Anthony (he of the Temptation) had attained the age of ninety, and had imagined himself for the greater part of this time to have been the first hermit that ever was, when it was revealed to him in a vision that this invention was really due to the St. Paul in question, now a hundred and thirteen years old, who was living in the place described above. St. Anthony, just a tiny bit vexed at finding himself forestalled, but quite dear and good about it all, instantly felt an irresistible impulse to go and see St. Paul. It was in the course of his search that he asked his way of the centaur, and was guided by the she-wolf, a little episode of charming sentiment. But nothing can come up to the tenderness of the arrival of the dear old saint at the other dear old saint's cave ; his lying all night at the door, watching the light through the rock ; and their

meeting, their embrace when each, without having been told, called the other by name; and the elder hermit, having had the joy of seeing the younger, died and was buried by him in the wilderness. . . . Besides, they often went out in large numbers, companies of friends, dispersing in a district, each building his little hermitage within call of the other; charming people, about whom I refuse to hear a single one of the horrid things which historians, and ascetic writers, and professional stylists like Flaubert, have had the bad taste to write.

They lived like that, St. Jerome already tells us, in the ilex woods above Spoleto. The woods get thicker and thicker as you ascend the "Mountain" above the steep stony town, so that you gradually get less and less view; instead of the look-down on the great Umbrian valley, pale with young crops, and across it to the Apennines, smoking with melted snows, you have only black gnarled trunks and black branches above banks of deep moss. But here and there, in the most unexpected way, at the path's turning, appears a pink or white little house, a grated, domed chapel, "Hemitage of St. Jerome the Doctor," "Hermitage called

after St. Paul the proto-hermit," and so forth, with a bit of terrace and a view. And never, never a single soul! During my ascent, of nearly an hour and a half, and my descent again, not one creature did I meet, save a man with a dog, and a priest, gaunt in a rusty cape, and riding on a pack mule.

I had come to Spoleto out of obstinacy, in frightful belated spring cold, and had regretted my folly. Bnt how right I had been! I knew it as soon as I had climbed to the top of the town, among the great rocks under the castle, and had felt the cold wet wind rush up the ravine, mountain air, coming from over rock, from among woods off the snow which is melting on the great, blue Apennines! I understood what had ailed me in Rome: the houses, the streets, the talking. The anchorites had felt like that in their day, no doubt, when they also fled from the kindness of kindest and most amusing friends, up into this mountain. . . . Meanwhile the woods closed again, with violets in the wet grass and few birds singing in the gloom. And as the path grew steeper, the woods darker, I began to notice scraps of melting snow, and

then more and more ; till, at what seemed the top (but one could not see), it lay quite thick under the ilexes. I went on. The ilexes, bigger and bigger, suddenly opened ; and there was a flattish dell, open, a field of purest snow, with only a black cross in the midst, the woods all round, and alongside a tiny house, with a chapel, a belfry, and a little yard, through whose deep snow a path had been freshly swept. I sat down under the porch. A Franciscan suddenly appeared out of the wood, crossed the snow and pulled at a rope ; a bell rang, and a minute after a chant arose, vespers. I lifted the latch of the chapel ; at the altar three monks and two acolytes and two kneeling peasants ; darkness only broken by the lights on the altar and before the coloured Calvary pictures. As I came out the birds were singing in the blackness of the ilexes ; the bell of the little chapel continued to toll ; and snow began to fall very gently. Thin flakes, mixed with rain, were still falling when I issued into the rocky gorge full of the roar and the draught of the torrent, as I left the ilex woods behind me.

I continued dreaming of the little snowfield

up there alongside of the chapel; and I understood that it was in some prevision of it that I had never been able all winter to see the snowstorms break above Vallombrosa without thinking of hermits, of anchorites.

GERMAN FIR TREES

"Und ist so lustig haussen in dem Wald."—The Wolf in "Rothkäppchen."

THE first sight, almost, which welcomed me to Germany was a fine timber skeleton house, just finished by the carpenters and waiting for its brick and mortar; and on its gable a gallantly beribboned little fir tree. A carpenter's tree like this had been the object of my longing when a child: fancy if one could have one (off a roof, of course) for one's *very own!* Something of this longing after the unattainable, heightened, perhaps, by the recollections of radiant German Christmases and their mysterious, resin-scented preparations, seems to awaken in me at the thought or distant view of German fir woods.

There was, for instance, a certain hill covered with fir woods which tantalized me lately all the time I stayed at that old castle of the Habsburgs. Below, and within easy reach, were

wonderful forests of beech, just touched with yellow, and sweeping with their silky skirts the dewy emerald grass; orchards moreover, garlanded and festooned with rosy apples. But what I wanted was the fir-clad hill. It lay back behind lower grassy slopes, very far and very high up: a dark, soft mass; and in its midst, making the tall trees stand out like a ragged mane, a great clearing, wide and vivid green. Day after day I walked up and down the lime-tree terrace by the *Rittersaal*, looking down from the rocky castle hill; and every time, day after day, my eyes were drawn by that unattainable forest. Such are the fir woods which beckon and murmur and draw one along all through German poetry, good, bad, and indifferent, from Walther von der Vogelweide to Heine.

For the woods (we have no word which really renders the meaning of that great singular *Der Wald*) are more intimately connected with the life of Germany than with that of other countries. Even apart from the enormous proportion of forest-land which strikes one if, for instance, one happens to cross Germany from north-west to south-east, from Holland to Venetia, the woods are much nearer than in

other countries (I count Switzerland and Tyrol as being German) to the haunts of men. In the centre and the south at least the forests actually surround the towns, holding their bit of valley, their fields and meadows, enclosed in their unchanging, evergreen mystery. So that the natural, almost the only, walk is into the forest, which thus becomes associated with all holiday-making, with rest from work and small amusing adventure. It is from the *Wald* that the bands of citizens and apprentices are returning, with Faust and Wagner behind, escorted by the eerie, circling poodle, through the spring twilight. That scene came vividly home to me, and seemed almost present, one Sunday that I had descended from the old castle: people from the little town were going to and fro the woods, whole families; and deep in the green depths a lot of well-dressed children were playing shrilly. The woods are the playground, real or imaginary, of the Teuton child—much as the sand and shingle are of the children of other countries; and, alas! as gravelled gardens with Punch and Judy are of other children still. They are the scene of escapade of bigger boys, instead of the river

to fish in as in England or France, or the hill-side with atrocious fowling-huts in Italy. And have we not all seen the portly, spectacled German burgher, adorned with forest-green braid and little falcon's feather, bringing a woodland quality, an echo of *Freischütz* horns, even on to tramcars and into museums? Let us not laugh—far from it. It merely means that the woods have rooted in the German heart and that they sprout and sough in every line of German poetry and every bar of German music.

But it is the essential quality of the German woods not to show traces of this commerce with man. No other places exist so wholly for themselves, so lonely, so different from human things. I am not thinking of great forests, really remote—say, of the Tyrol, fragrant wildernesses of fir and larch, where every clearing lets in the view of the great blue, jagged mountains veined with snow or veiled with vapours. The fir woods I am thinking of are, as I said, those surrounding towns, and from whose depths the wild men, petticoated and crowned with leaves and carrying leafy clubs, had but a very little walk to go when sitting

for their portrait on coat-of-arms or sign of hostelry. For instance, the woods round about Eisenach, under the Wartburg. I saw them first, a hurried glimpse, before going to my inn on a clear autumn day, the frost just melted on the grass and on the yellow bushes; but I brought back an impression of infinite silence and remoteness of a valley, far, far away, bright green meadows tipped with crocus, and steep slopes of dense black fir.

The next day I had more time, but did not need to go much further. For sitting on the dry, brown, needle-covered ground I had my fill of woodland stillness. The high masts of the firs, with their banner-like boughs, are so close together as to make a concentrated light—a light quite special, meaning enclosure, almost sanctuary, in which all colour—the rose of the beechmast, the green of the moss in patches and ridges—takes a solemn vividness. Further along there was a little plantation of beech saplings, growing in high shafts with bunches of pale, yellowing leaves against the gaps of white, watery sky, and round them the firs once more, motionless, unruffled, though there ran through them a sough as of the distant sea,

gathering at times to a deep, deep sound—a sound ubiquitous, mysterious, and baffling, like those paths which one's eye makes everywhere between the tree trunks. By the side of that Eisenach forest what a poor piece of cardboard operatic romance was not the Wartburg! The poetry of Germany was not in it and its Minnesingers, genuine or spurious, but in the fir-trees below.

But there are fir woods more lyric still, and in a neighbourhood so profaned by mankind that I dare not whisper its name for fear of making you incredulous. Suffice it that, not a mile off, people sit by the hundred, on blue and red wicker chairs, chattering, while a band brays and clashes in front and electric trams clatter and shriek all round. But the woods know nothing of it. They have precipitous, downhill places, very dark, where one sees only the great grey boles; and hillocks, where the pennons, the masts, and rigging of the firs stand black against the sky; and little valleys with old, isolated trees grown immense, and stumps and tiny sprouting things deep in the moss and bilberry; clearings with stacked-up wood, filling the warm air with delicious

aromatic scent. And, most delightful of all, hollows packed with bright green saplings, making one understand the adjective spruce, with each shooting up to its little green cross, extending its stiff little branches halfway up, and letting the lowest boughs barely touch the grass, like the brocade farthingale of some baby princess. These plantations of saplings bring the delightful thought of what these vivid green, symmetrical, erect, and cheerful little trees have each and all a chance of becoming—Christmas trees like those I can see with my mind's eye in the market-place at W——, things one intrigued as a child to go near when taken a walk, and about which, while dragged along by the impatient nurse, one wondered what size, indeed *which*, among those green, stiff, varnished-looking trees, would *be one's own.*

It is good to think of such Christmas trees of the past and the future. It is good also to think that if the little sapling do not end in such radiant premature death, it may grow into one of the solemn pennoned troopers of that great forest army; or into the mast of a big ship, helping to mimic a forest in the docks;

or be cut into children's toys, horses with arched necks or dolls with apple cheeks; or, again, form part of the carpenter's scaffolding for a house, maybe covered with paper bouquets and streamers, and planted triumphantly on the gable of the half-finished building.

And here I must pause. For singing the praises of fir trees (as of friends, lovers, and native place) is a pleasure by no means always communicated to the listener, and therefore to be gratified only at intervals and by insidious methods. Let me but note that the last of these Teutonic beribboned carpenters' trees which greeted my sight six weeks ago while crossing Switzerland, was near the station of Olten, and on the top, alas! of the iron boiler of a new factory of *Sunlight* Soap! But close behind was a bend of the Aar, glass-green, brimful, majestic, with its fringe of russet scrub and sedge; and the Christmas tree, from the top of its boiler, can talk with the great river about the great woods.

COMPIÈGNE AND FONTAINEBLEAU

THOUGH greener, fresher, deeper—indeed of inexpressible deep, fresh leafiness, these endless woods of Compiègne, broken off, interrupted, but for ever resumed on all sides, leave much the same impression as do those of Fontainebleau. They are not real forest in the sense of Germany, Ravenna, or even Ireland, in *my sense*, so to speak; but great parks mapped out and planted for Royal amusement; radiations of smooth white roads from the big quincunxed palace, and then more radiations along them, wide grassy avenues, green cuttings where the trees are close, deep tracks in russet leaves where they are thinned, all marked with sign-posts bearing courtly names. At every cross-road—and they are endless—one sees in fancy the great Royal coaches rolling as on the green and blue ground of Louis XV. tapestries. One

feels the pomp, but none of the romance, of historical hunting. What one is told of the still remaining sport, the traditional or revived hunts, with brilliant, varied *livrées*, jack-boots, *habit à la française*, faced and galooned, horns and barking hounds, all confirms the impression. So that the stag one thinks of, and almost expects to meet breaking the green covert or crossing the glade, is not a very real one, but rather a monumental creature sculptured by Goujon or Pilon, ready to kneel down and prop some long-limbed Diane de Poitiers of the rounded forehead and the moon-shaped brows.

But this artificial and courtly quality, common to both those two great French Royal hunting grounds, while at Fontainebleau it breaks off suddenly with the outlying villages, at Compiègne merely expands into the enchanting and improbable Watteau festiveness of the skirts of the forest. Two slow, full rivers, the Aisne and the Oise, crowned like proper garden nymphs with sedge, arrange their cool bosquets of poplars into fanciful islands and unreal harbours, while the grass and unripe crops make themselves into seeming lawns embosomed by the soft round darkness of the tufty

forest. 'Tis an ample, majestic, voluptuous, and, as I said, artificial-looking country, in which the little villages of fine old grey stone and their flowery gardens (stately rose hollyhocks everywhere) have an air of park lodges, and the big stone barns play at being old manor houses, as if the French peasant did not exist, and the Ancien Régime still continued, with its marquises and gallant abbés dressed as shepherds and shepherdesses, and preparing, under the gorgeous summer sky, for a fresh departure *pour Cythère*.

Here and there also there are indications, which fancy multiplies and enlarges, of all that great hunting life which has dwindled into the amusement of a few smart persons, more fit for Gyp and Anatole France than for the novels and *memoires* of Boucher and Lancret days. There are some big white châteaux, their modernness veiled in trees, inns *à la Hure*, with ample stabling, and kennels surmounted by stone stags' heads; glimpses also, ever and anon, from the high roads into the thickets of tall regular beeches, dainty on their carpet of green lily leaves.

I drove one warm evening through this

flounced and furbelowed country by the side of the greatest of living decorative painters; and seemed to see it, thanks to a gesture now and then of his whip, or a movement of his head, silently, in one direction or another, half transformed into triumphant ceilings and panels in public palaces; feeling through his genius the fulness of the luxurious and courtly landscape—*féerique* in the French sense, magnificent, spectacular, entirely for pomp and pleasure. It gave me a little shock of surprise, and a certain sense of relief, when suddenly, at a bend of a road, we came upon a great ripe cornfield, and on its edge a tall black crucifix surrounded by a little square of trimmed lime-trees, hard and serious against the greenish sky.

For quite another reason, because it is the Royal park's negation instead of its crowning poetry, is the outlying country at Fontainebleau far more attractive to me than the forest itself. At Barbizon, for instance, there is a positive delight, on issuing from the village street, in finding one's self no longer in that vast green prison, but in the open country; Millet's country, too, of serene and fruitful human labour. I remember how I felt it, one August

afternoon : the big gently sloping cornfields, stooks and sheaves lying shining, spread out ; great stacks here and there, and, close behind us, a big grey stone farmyard. Pale stubble ; very pale, smoky-blue distance of poplars, with the church tower of Chailly-en-Bûre ; a few figures—a boy leading a horse, for instance, a scarlet reaping machine, with a faded bouquet tied to it—taking importance in this simplicity. A pale lilac sunset was taking place among clouds ; a great silvery beam descending, descending in benediction on this sweet, delicate, human, solemn country. And there were larks and swallows singing and whirring overhead, after those silent miles of waterless, birdless forest.

Every now and then, walking in the glades and paths, particularly where the beeches have been cut, and have shot up in slender white stems, out of the red autumn leaves, filtering the light to vivid green ; and again, in those solemn places where one suddenly intrudes upon some solitary giant oak, Pharamond or Jupiter, I felt that if one could wander in it for weeks, Fontainebleau forest would become a great real, in a way organic, personality for

one. Nay, one guessed it, merely poring over the map, and taking in the vastness of its extent and its many incidents. But, as a whole, and superficially there is about it something wearying in the sense that it is all made by human hands but for no human purpose. One wants, for spiritual comfort, methinks, both fields and vineyards and dairy meadows telling of mankind's loving and well-rewarded labour ; and moors and woods and marshes for birds and beasts, for trees and heather and mosses and stones and *their* manifold modes of life. But Fontainebleau is neither ; its meaning is of the jejune historical kind, and one grasps it thoroughly only after a dreary morning of going over the acres of yards, of corridors, of halls and rooms and galleries and pavilions of the palace, and realizing the colossal idol worship of the Ancien Régime. All this much stone and mortar, all these forest roads and glades for one little life-size King !

THE FOREST OF THE ANTONINES

"I WANT to see the Forest of the Antonines," said my friend; so off we started. It was a forest, this Forest of the Antonines (which or what Antonines? People in the town below, or perhaps Roman Emperors with laurel crowns?) of marvellous fir trees. Not, perhaps, very extensive, but incalculably old and quite infinitely mysterious. I gathered that she had heard of it (though never since) during her childhood in the lower Apennine valleys; but, so far as I ascertained, not from any one who had ever been there. She did not explain why she imagined it to exist more particularly in the neighbourhood where I was staying; nor did it ever occur to me to ask. All I knew was that the Forest of the Antonines must lie somewhere in those higher mountain regions, and that I also wanted to see it. We

beat the country for two days, and in various directions; moreover, asking information of every one along the roads.

The narrow valleys were filled, as usual in the Apennines, with monotonous bright-green chestnut trees, grown for their fruit, at proper distances as in an orchard; and along the crests, under the bare peaks, there were, also as usual, beeches clipped down to scrub for charcoal. At the end of a long, flat road snaking between two precipices, there was a sort of region of nothing at all, with a few bleak farms and a forlorn chapel belfry, and a tuft of wind-warped trees around them. I think we both of us had a vague feeling that this place had somehow something to do with our quest. But as to a forest, there was none; and there certainly was not a fir-tree far and wide (those about the forlorn buildings were quite irrefutably sycamores).

"It must be somewhere up here," said my friend pensively; "the Forest of the Antonines, I mean." And with these words we went home. Did a Forest of the Antonines ever exist anywhere? Was it one of those phantom places arisen in a child's fancy from some

misunderstood but long-brooded-over word, and which continue sometimes to haunt and beckon, mirage-like, through years and years ?

This much is certain, that my friend's belief evidently passed into me ; and that although (after that unsuccessful journey of discovery) I cannot remember our ever mentioning the name together, I often caught myself thinking about the Forest of the Antonines, and always as something unquestionably delectable and strange.

So that I had a peculiar little feeling of surprise and yet of familiarity, two or three months ago, when I found myself for the first time in those only remaining firwoods of the Apennine crest. The place was quite a different one and bore a totally different name. But I knew it was the Forest of the Antonines, and the knowledge was delightful. I knew it the first evening I spent in that high valley. In a few minutes I found myself in the forest, drawn to its heart and its mysteries. The poignant sylvan smell of distant charcoal ovens mingled in the sweetness of wet leaves and moss and warm fir-resin. And from the bottom of the ravine rose the sound of the forest's secret, of

the invisible stream. The sense of mysterious immanent presence was so great in that place that after a few minutes I turned round where I sat on the rocks to make sure that no one was behind me. The gorge gradually filled with vapours, hiding the rocky peaks, and steaming up as from a distant cauldron from the far-off plains : they sending their heat, and the mountains thrusting it back, with the rushing water and its draughts, and its virgin freshness. This is the most mysterious part of the whole of that Apennine forest. One has the illusion of a great semicircle filled with woods. And towards dusk the bare peaks, becoming bodiless —mere pale-blue wraiths against the white sky —recede indefinitely, letting the woods extend as far as fancy would have them, ridding one of the knowledge that this seeming Northern forest is but a little tract of mountain flank and summit ; letting one imagine that this is some land east of the sun and west of the moon, out of whose mysterious depth one would never walk, walked one ever so long.

For this is the peculiarity of that Apennine forest (making one identify it with that forest of the Antonines which existed only in my

friend's childish imagination) that it is only a sample of what might be, should have been, of what once was, and which one's heart's desires must make the most of and enclose itself within. The thin chestnut woods—orchards where every tree is grafted and pruned—begin a hundred yards below, and are the reality of the country, sloping down the great spurs, filling the valleys, changing gradually into oak thicket, scrub of myrtle and lentisk, olive and vineyard, pine and cypress grove, all the things of that South we had thought to escape from, as they approach the plains, the cities, or the sea. And, more sadly, dwindling rapidly away, in the highest regions even, into melancholy dotting of stumps of fir and beech upon the sere grass, the ever-increasing barren rock, whence the waters rush down to ravage instead of blessing.

The longing for forests, for the reality of which this half-imaginary forest of the Antonines is but the sample, does meet with satisfaction in the past. Italy has had her gods Sylvanus and Picus. There remain, in Southernmost Tuscany and Umbria, whole hillsides of scrub which was once a marvellous forest of

ilex; oak woods have been as common all over the peninsula as in England; the tall trees of the inextricable Maremma jungle have been cut down within the memory of man; and there yet remains along the Adriatic, and even the Mediterranean, the marvellous fairyland of the great pinetas. But everywhere the wooded parts of Italy have dwindled. Heaven knows when the mischief began. It is a story of greed and wastefulness, for the clearings needful to make a country inhabitable and fertile must have been accomplished thousands of years ago, and all since then been mere destruction. A history of it, could it be written, would be instructive. It would, I imagine, be found that the destruction of the forests of Italy kept pace with the decline of Italy's commerce and industry, idle and impoverished nobles turning everything they could to ready money; and the crushing taxation which has been the price of national independence sweeping away the last vestiges of woodland. The division of property following the French Revolution, and the sudden demand for cash resulting from the wars of Napoleon, is one of the chief incidents of the tragedy. The big trees

of the Maremma were cut down and burnt for potash just at that period; and, so far as I can make out, the fir woods of the high Apennines, wherever they were private property, disappeared about the same time. Things have happened under our very eyes: the haunted forest of the Montello, in the province of Treviso, whence the Venetian arsenal had got the oakwood for its galleys, was cut down to the last tree about twenty years ago. The process of destruction follows a fatal course: the big trees are felled; the charcoal burner periodically cuts the oak, ilex, or beech woods; cattle are allowed to browse before a new wood has arisen for him; then follows the peasant scraping brushwood for the bakehouse; then come the sheep; after the sheep the goats; and after the goats it is time for the sun, the frosts, and the rains to wither and ravage.

By an irony of things, it is, of course, the element most wanted in these climates, water, which turns against man and brings desolation. Close to that Apennine crest, but on the northern slope where the forests have been destroyed, is a little town, Fiumalbo, once the

hunting seat of the Dukes of Modena and the metropolis, so to speak, of those valleys. It is at the deep bottom of a great steep valley; clapped down, grey stone roofs, shabby houses once handsome, between two torrents which encircle it like a moat, and looking like a piece of torrent bed itself; the slopes of dry yellow grass and thin chestnuts rise from it, with melancholy crevasses and landslips of pale soil; and above, veiled and unveiled by wet black clouds, stands Monte Cimone, the highest Northern Apennine peak, its base thinly dotted with stunted little trees. There is a bridge over either torrent bed, and in the middle, far below the road, is huddled the sad little town, with the remains of a castle, a gaunt seminary, and a kind of palace, with a scrub of neglected garden, once the summer residence of the Estensi. Then the church—oh! such a battered, stained, God-forgotten old church, filled with votive pictures of people falling off trees and wounding themselves with axes, telling that this poor, scant population is one of woodcutters and charcoal burners (carrying their skill to distant parts, the Maremma, Corsica, and even France); and outside the church a few rude sculptures of

little Crusaders on horseback, like chessmen : Fiumalbo once had sovereign lords, and its inhabitants fought for the Holy Sepulchre. One feels that it was once a kind of capital : many of the houses have a look of palaces, with outer stair and loggia, and stone escutcheons. Its only history nowadays is that of floods. It is periodically overwhelmed by the two torrents, which wreck and desolate everything. Some fifteen years ago the population was barely saved, and the coffins—horrible to think of !—were torn by the waters and by the stones of the torrent out of the churchyard and dashed along the rocks and the houses. I asked the local doctor how in the world he explained that this town should ever have been built in that hole, in the very bed of those adjoining torrents. His answer shed a great light upon the history and condition of that region, and, for the matter of that, of all Italy. "At the time of the building of Fiumalbo," he said, "the position was a good and sheltered one. The torrents were not dangerous—not torrents at all, but streams with a regular flow. The mountains were covered with forests.

"Our fathers," added the doctor, sadly,

"could still remember them at the foot of the Cimone and the Rondinaio."

This, then, was the Apennines' revenge! And it was the coffins, very likely, of the self-same men who had cut down the forests which were dragged out of the ground and hurled along by those torrents of their own making.

MONT ST. MICHEL

WHEN the omnibus was due to take me from Mont St. Michel to the main land, I ran back to tip the maid of the little private house where the inn had billeted me, and asked for a glass of water. The old lady of the house, Mdlle. de Blangine, who was writing near her dining-room window, heard my request, and, calling to the maid, insisted on my having something in the water : a little *fleur d'oranger*. . . . This was the pleasantest and (such is human perverseness !) the most suggestive impression I derived from this historic place I had read so much about, and wanted so long to see.

The little house, just underneath the abbey, is on the southern side of the rock, covered with wild white clematis, big fig-trees growing in its scrambling garden ; and as I went to and fro my tidy little room, I had had glimpses of

quaint eighteenth-century furniture, and antique warming-pans, like ornamental glowing suns, hanging up in the pantry. This charming old maiden lady with her aristocratic name, letting out rooms to Mme. Poulard Aîné's superfluous tourists; never showing herself except to make that gracious hospitable offer at my departure; I have often thought of her since. She has put a little human romance, in Balzac's gentler vein, into my recollections of the Mont St. Michel.

The first impression had been dreary: the brakes from the mainland crowded with jostling tourists; the main street arched and turreted suspiciously like some cardboard "Old London;" every alternate house a restaurant or shop for Souvenirs du Mont St. Michel; then, once beyond the tourists' shouts, the endless evil-smelling steps and dust-heap corners, and ramparts with unvarying view of leagues of sad, wet sands. A hidden sunset was going on when I reached the top of the rock. I walked up and down, in and out of the desecrated abbey church, choked with dusty scaffoldings inside, and barricaded outside with unused cranes and trolleys; and, for all this desecration

of supposed repair, mouldy and green with damp. In front, below, stretched miles of grey sands to an invisible sea; and over them hung a pall of leaden clouds with ladders of pale-grey beams. The tourists were at dinner in the various Poulard inns; and the only living sound was the screech of greedy seagulls round the rock. Rarely in all my life has any place filled me with such overwhelming sadness and desire to rush away.

But descending from the Abbey, and skirting the little churchyard in the dusk, I stumbled upon a little half-hidden church, and entered. It was dark, irregularly spotted with candlelight for service, and unseen women were chanting a litany. A church, I imagine, quite modern and trivial; but in that darkness, only the altar blazing, with vague sheen of gold from the procession banners hanging all round, and the scanty, scarce visible, congregation bending over the *prie-dieux*, it might have been of any time; and made me realize, with reverence and tenderness, the reality of this place of mediæval pilgrimage, this sanctuary, girt with quicksands, of "St. Michael in the Peril of the Sea," to whom Roland commended his soul when he perished.

This put me in conceit with Mont St. Michel, and made me a little indignant with myself. What! I had wanted a place of pilgrimage for my own private sentimental delectation, strictly without pilgrims, or at best only ghostly pilgrims made for myself! Fie upon such superfineness! Mankind is always vulgar, for vulgarity is mere misapplication of its energies, or perhaps misapplication of *our* squeamishness; and without mankind, vulgarity and all, no Mont St. Michel and no *me* to cavil about it. The Canterbury pilgrims, judging by some of the stories they related, were vulgar; the pilgrims to Eleusis, from words dropped by Aristophanes, were even vulgarer; and there is considerable lack of dignity and sweetness in the crowd of ladies celebrating the entombment of Adonis, in the account left by Theocritus. And are not tourists the modern and lay representatives of pilgrims, starting on their journey, however much they yell on the brakes and squabble for Mme. Poulard Aîné's omelette, with desires of spiritual improvement and vague, unwonted feelings of romance?

This altered, and more humane, attitude of mind allowed me to take a certain pleasure,

later in the evening, in watching from the little garden gate the bands of tourists going from the eating-houses to their various resting-places for the night : moving blobs of Japanese lanterns, red and orange and green, and yellow lights and grotesque shadows moving along the old wooden house fronts, and across the turrets and battlements, with snatches of comic songs and goblin laughter. Thus, no doubt, the rollicking pilgrims of old, for whom the abbey was built, and the great vaulted and pillared refectories and foresteries.

The most painful circumstance, I mused next morning, as I watched the bands of shopkeepers from Paris, and peasants in blouses, and peasant women in delicate starched caps—the most painful circumstance about pilgrims, antique or mediæval or modern (and then called tourists), is that the thing which attracts them most, more than crowding on the brake, and shouting in the street, and fighting for the omelettes, happens to be the gruesome element—the horrid gaping wounds of young Adonis and his various divine brothers or successors ; the place where Becket was murdered, the stone whence St. Paul's decollated head made the

three jumps, the cupboard where Catherine de Médicis kept her poisons, the planks still stained with Rizzio's blood; and here, at Mont St. Michel, the dungeons.

It had cost me half-an-hour's parley in an office, much misrepresentation of myself as a student of architecture, and a good silver piece of a hundred sous, to be exempted from the sight and full-length description of those dungeons. "The dungeons form an integral portion of the celebrated Abbey of Mont St. Michel and of its history; the official guides are under strictest orders to conduct all visitors to them between the church and the refectories; if Madame therefore desires to see the cloisters, Madame cannot logically be exempted from the visit of the dungeons." Madame, however, as stated above, being possessed of an illogical mind, circumvented the logical French nation on this occasion, and sat for a couple of hours in the cloisters while party after party streamed through, at regular intervals, to and fro the dungeons.

The official guide turned the key on me every time, feigning not to notice my presence; and the solitude and silence between each

clattering and vociferating incursion was only the more absolute. The charm of that cloister (to my mind, far greater than that of its elaborate granite carvings) is due to its being overlooked on one side by the pinnacles and flying buttresses, the whole blackened rockery, with haunting gargoyles, of the apse of the abbey church; while, by a very wide window, it overlooks the sands, the pale pinky-brown incoming tide, and the band of blue offing under the rainy, mottled sky. And, sheer underneath, are the roots, so to speak, of the fortified abbey, broken black walls and turrets striking into the rock and the grass like the big ash trees which grow among them. There are the remains of a kitchen garden and what was perhaps a bowling-green, and great thickets of grass and cow parsley, haunted by rabbits and magpies; and plumb below the pale curdled sands. No monk of old, I said to myself, ever enjoyed or conceived such solitude in these cloisters as I am enjoying, thanks to those tourists. . . .

I thought, however, that, as I have already said, the most notable impression I should carry away that day would be of old Mlle. de

Blangine, in her neat Louis XV. parlour, sending out the maid to offer me the orange flower-water. But it was not so. After leaving the cloister, and watching Mme. Poulard Aîné, deftly reverse, between the two plates, omelette after omelette (the main live interest of Mont St. Michel consists in the feuds of innumerable Poulards, elder, younger, sons, nephews, grandsons, each setting forth on posters and by word of mouth that he alone is possessed of the genuine recipe for the classic omelette *soufflée*) —and after waiting on the ramparts above the inn, above the slate roofs and turrets and fig-trees, for my own turn, my own little share of omelette to come, I had to wait again for the train at Pontorson, and elected to do so not among the raging tourists and porters and omnibus drivers, but in the churchyard. And in a corner, among a heap of rubbish and watched over by the great wolf gargoyles of the granite tower, I found an English inscription: "Sacred to the memory of Sarah Webster, of Biddeford, North Devon, England, who fell asleep in Jesu, August 24, 1869, aged 29 years, leaving an affectionate husband and child." This grave seemed sadder even than

that of the Neapolitan sailor-boy in the churchyard at Tintagel; the moral distance between some flowery English village, and this dirty, black Norman graveyard even greater. She must have died on a journey, a pleasure trip to this very Mont St. Michel with her husband and baby; she must have been, poor young creature, thus left behind in alien land, a pilgrim, a tourist.

A WALK IN THE MAREMMA

IT is only in a country like this Maremma, where one lives all day in the saddle, that can be learned the full meaning, the especial virtues, of a solitary walk. As one rides along, the loveliest landscapes unfurl and furl, in front and behind ; they are tantalizing, unclutchable. And in the longing for closer acquaintance, it is borne in on one that it is only with the feet that complete possession is taken of a country. It is only while walking, and walking by one's self, that—to paraphrase Swinburne—one touches and tastes it, and breathes it, and lives of its life.

It was raining gently—indeed, it was the rain which had prevented our riding as usual—during that walk yesterday, my only walk among all these days on horseback. And I did not go any distance ; in fact, kept almost within call of the Castle, high on its rock above

the confluence of the two streams. I scrambled along—and scrambling is the most intimate form of walking, the one bringing the most affectionate knowledge—along the banks where spates have filled the lower branches of the leafless elms and rosy-budding aspens with armfuls of dry bramble, clematis-tendril, and reeds; foolish Ophelia-wreaths under the real garlands of ivy, which crown the top; immense dry nests ready for fantastic birds, bigger than the heron who sailed over us at the ford, indeed for birds altogether of Fairyland. What joy to feel the soft flood sand under one's feet, to wet one's hands picking the snowdrops in the green moss and sere leaves, to stay listening to the song of the stream, one's ear close to it, on the big stones its white waters encircle!

During a drive, even during a sauntering ride at foot's pace, one does not think; or thinks of other matters; but when one walks alone in a not quite familiar country, one thinks about *it*—it only, and finds out every little reason for loving it.

In this manner it was not before yesterday's scramble along those river banks under the Castle that I understood what is at the bottom of a

great deal of the Maremma's fascination for me, and the charm, more particularly, of its river landscape and its rolling pastures. This country realizes something I have, so to speak, guessed at for years and years, and longed for, not merely whenever the Roman express rushed me through the shallow Sabine valleys, but long, long ago, during those monotonous rounds of the Roman villas. I remember so well that, as a child the sense almost of being imprisoned, in that desolation-girdled Rome, used to weigh on my spirits; and how I used to feel rather than think that certain bends of road of Villa Borghese—grass dells traversed by winding rows of oaks, thickets in holes, and wide swelling meadows in the sunshine, must be samples (even to their wooden fences and weather-stained farm-buildings) of something—how shall I say it?—well, something *real*, which existed, I knew not where, beyond the walls of Rome and the stretch of its empty Campagna.

This sense of being shown a tiny sample (the reality, the *enough* utterly denied one) is frequent in that great stage scene run up by the centuries and called Rome, where vistas are

rarely otherwise than baffling, and things are not what they looked when you try to walk into them. But the feeling can come equally in other places and is one of the incidents, the *peripezie*, of the religion of the *Genius Loci;* one of the small cruelties with which, like every other divinity, he troubles and chastens and makes ready the souls of his worshippers. It is by the repetition of such moments of baffled longing that the topographical imagination acquires its passionate power, the power of sweeping along folds of hills and woods (like these I have before me as I sit sunning myself behind the Castle bakehouse, where the mules are unloading the fragrant faggots of evergreens), and of penetrating along the hidden bends of river valleys; nay, even of poising and circling over mere points and lines on a map, and lingering among names of places one shall never see.

And with the realization of such long-dreamed-of possibilities comes a different but closely related joy to the idle lover of localities. One recognizes vaguely, but with deep and permeating satisfaction, that since this is a reality, there must be more, much more of it; and that

this especial character and loveliness is, in all probability, one of the many great modes of the world's existence. I felt it poignantly along this little Maremma stream, while looking at the great lentisk and myrtle bushes, grown to trees because unattainable where they hang to the red soil under the Castle terrace. Of lentisks and myrtles like those there must be forests somewhere or other. Such jade-green and crystalline streams under ivied elms must flow innumerable. Such wide sweeps of flattened valley, rounded with lilac leaflessness and soft plume of evergreen, must stretch for miles and miles. This is a whole great country, this seaboard between Arno and Tiber, this ancient Etruria ; it is a reality, and must have sister-regions throughout the dominions of the gods of Greece and of Italy.

As I scrambled along the stream, where the autumn leaves were sprinkled white with snowdrops, the water took rosy and purple stains ; and the rainy sky opened blue and moist, surrounded by colossal mounds of white and crimson and inky cumulus. And when I had climbed up the Castle hill and got to its shoulder, behold ! a great dark storm was

coming up from the sea, filling the shallow valley with smoke. It thundered ; and short white lightnings danced above the woods, only one blood-red stain marking the place of the setting sun.

"Snow in the Apennine," said the head huntsman. And indeed to-day it is cloudless, and the Maremma lies pale buff and pale lilac and russet, its rivers bright and azure, under a radiant winter sky.

I am sitting, as I said, writing in my note-book, by the Castle bakehouse ; the smell of fresh bread, of sweet charred olive-wood issuing from it ; and the first twitter of birds mingling with the rustle of the river far below. The thoughts of yesterday return to my mind, the pleasure I felt in finding myself, at last, in the kind of country I had so long guessed at and wished for. But thinking it all over, and trying to understand this phase of our sentimental intercourse with places, I begin to believe there is something more. Is there not at the bottom of it all, like reversed harmonics which give the whole state of mind its special quality, its *timbre*, the hidden suspicion that the reality in question, the similar *beyond* which we

delight in, has no existence? That it is we who have made it out of our soul's stuff, out of our own dreams and wishes, as we secretly make all the things we care for most?

LES CHARMETTES

I HAD forgotten, one might have said, the very existence of the Charmettes ; and was not even clear about their whereabouts when my hosts alluded to them : were they near Chambéry or on this Lake of Annecy ? Yet, now that I have been there, it has become quite plain that I must have been, if not thinking, at least *feeling* about them for a long time ; and that those ten autumn days in Savoy were nothing but a preparation, secretly compassed by the *Genius Loci*, to whom I minister, for that bit of romance.

I almost fancy the thing began as soon as I had crossed the Channel. Not merely with the unaccustomed brightness and heat ; but rather with the faint sweet smell of the clematis, dusty along the roads, and the smell, sweeter and more evocative still, of the ivy bloom, telling of old farmhouses in Touraine, of the courtyards of

Italian hillside villas. And once in Savoy, in my first stroll among the vineyards by the lake, I seemed to smell, to taste the South as I picked the tiny lilac blooms of the dry peppermint off the rough walls. But the whole impression was, of course, very far from being merely Southern ; just as it is the unexpected mixture which makes the special charm of Rousseau. Even on the first radiant day, with the western mountains made blue and unsubstantial—Italian, so to speak—by the sun behind them ; and the light permeating the vines and walnut leaves, making them liquid gold and green, there was the sense that this was the North, Swiss, almost German, with the homely romanticalness of barns and châlets, and little pepperpot castles, and many-windowed, steep-roofed houses in the vineyards. And across the creek of marvellous, enamel-blue water came the sound of whetting scythes, with its suggestion of the freshness and purity of high places and of short summers.

The weather soon broke up. It poured for days ; and when the great black clouds rolled back, there was a powdering of snow on rocks and grass, and Savoy had lost all its look of Italy.

Les Charmettes

When I got to Chambéry it was bitter cold; the black clouds lay along the mountains, making, with the grey roofs and grey stone houses, a depressing symphony in chill and dreariness. I don't know when I have spent a morning of such dull bad temper as the one in which I tried to extract—and failed—some sort of interest out of that dreadful town, rejected alike, it seemed to me, by Italy and France. It was with a stupid sense of traveller's duty, and a degrading wish to kill a few hours of this over-short life, that I set out for the Charmettes. Since the Charmettes—that much I had gained—are near Chambéry.

There is no kind of house more delightful to me than what I must call the Louis XV. pavilion, with its long wide windows of small panes, its faded shutters flap to flap above the great garland of wistaria, and its high roof of silvery slate among the trees. One has seen such a house a score of times, in every old-world French provincial town. The eye and fancy are drawn to it, wishing to penetrate into its closed rooms and its forgotten story; and one goes out of one's way, very likely, to get a better view; or returns to those

town outskirts, to that corner of leafy lane, in order to get one glimpse again over the orchard walls. It seems a kind of magic to pass through the twisted iron gate, on to the little terrace with the oleanders and pomegranates in discoloured tubs; and altogether unreal to be pulling, with some hope of admission, at the rusty bell. . . .

After a minute, which I spent looking at the big mountains (for the Louis XV. pavilion was the Charmettes), a peasant woman came out of the adjacent farm and unlocked the door. And now comes the second strand of improbability in this web of unlikely dreams. The house you enter stands empty, but with the air of having been inhabited till yesterday, though perhaps inhabited a little by ghosts: chairs and tables are in their places on the broken brick floor or dusty parquet; a big Louis XV. sideboard also with a few coarse Strasburg plates and a set of pewter; and beds, in their alcoves, with moth-eaten silk quilts; while on the walls, among mirrors cracked and dimmed, hang the portraits of the late owners. In the dining-room a faded poster sets forth that this *Propriété* is for sale, with its gardens and vineyards;

eighty thousand francs they ask for it, furniture and all.

In the course of one's wanderings—and in Italy especially—one has stumbled occasionally into places like this, standing untouched, save by decay, as they stood a century and a half ago ; and ready to be inhabited by any purchaser who should have the nerve to share a house with inmates not of this world. But never have I seen a similar place so utterly according to the heart's desire. The small size of the house, the exquisite proportions of the rooms and stairs, the grace of mouldings, bevellings, and *trumeaux ;* the elegance of the sparse, scant furniture, even to the charming green-branched wall-papers—I have seen things of the same kind, even lived among them (my *mansarde* room, with Louis XV. silhouette aunts and green lilac pattern on the walls, at my friend's near Fribourg) ; but never have I seen anything so complete or so perfect. So completely and perfectly, also, of the Past !

One would loiter in these rooms ; pick out old *rondò* tunes or minuets, perhaps, on the spinet ; wonder what faces had mirrored themselves in these spotted glasses, what manner of

people had taken the air among the box borders in the sight of those great mountains. And one would turn away unwillingly (perhaps returning for a last glance) after plucking a sprig of the myrtle against the door; and depart, not without looking back and wondering, among scrappy reminiscences of the "Nouvelle Héloïse" and of "Werther," what the romance of this house might have been.

And then! That there should really be a romance in that romantic place; the romance, pathetic, enchanting, wofully human, cynically sad, and surpassing even "Manon Lescaut" in eighteenth-century essence: the romance of the first volume of the "Confessions"!

I walked quite a long time up and down the little terraced garden, and round the farm and barns and manure-heaps and walnut trees, up into the vineyard above the grey, pointed roof. And—having promised the peasant woman not to touch anything in the garden—I did *not* take a sprig of that myrtle against the house door. But I felt at liberty, in the rough grass among the vines, to pick a mignonette flower; stunted, and certainly no mere wild scentless one, but

some degenerate straggler out of the garden; and, who knows? of the seed planted by Jean Jacques and *Maman*.

These Charmettes, so French, yet with their Swiss, and in a manner South German, surroundings (this country might be Bavaria or the Southern Palatinate) are typical of what Rousseau's genius stands for. Typical, like his real story with Madame de Warens, which is so wholly unlike the light or brutal scandals (from Marivaux to the *Liaisons Dangereuses*) of eighteenth-century France. A story, in its sensual crudeness, yet full of poetry and sadness, and purified at every step by those escapades into solitude and nature, mad wanderings over hill and dale, which might be in *Wilhelm Meister*, nay, even in Stevenson.

These thoughts went on in my head for the rest of that cold, dull day in the dismal town of Chambéry; and although I ended at a bookseller's and bought a stout yellow-backed "Œuvres de J. J. Rousseau: Les Confessions;" nay, spent the evening turning over its pages, my inner eye was full of the little house among the walnut trees and the vineyards; and I seemed to know whatever was

worth knowing of the poor wretched boy of genius and his dear, exquisite, and unprincipled protectress, far better than any book could set it forth.

IN THE EUGANEAN HILLS

IT was pitch dark as we drove from Padua; the long, damp halos of the carriage-lamps revealing nothing but endless avenues of plane and thinly fringed canals along the way. So it was but next day that I took in the fact, when the mists thinned away under the windows, that the house I had come to was in the Euganean Hills. The autumn morning became exquisitely sweet, dim, yet luminous; the sky visible, but thinly veiled with white. In the great stillness of things the slow descent of a yellow leaf, the fall of an acorn, took a sort of gentle importance; voices, the noise of cocks and hens, the click of a smithy, came clear but as out of a hidden distance. Autumn and Italy mysteriously wrought together one of their loveliest deeds of magic: melting away everything in the world except a delicate outline, changing the hills into atmosphere luminous, buoyant, silvery

and azure ; effacing all save the nearest detail, and that made uncertain and baffling—a plain or a lake, houses or cypresses ? It seemed the fit interior of that Euganean group, fantastic always in their curious shape and complete isolation, and in their forming a bubble-shaped cluster in that extinct, long silted-up piece of sea. The Euganeans, moreover, which one gets to think of as a kind of mirage at Venice, mostly invisible, even in clearest weather, and, rising up, hyacinth-blue cones against the amber or the suffused crimson of the sunset, fitful, unreal islands of Circe or Armida.

There is, to my mind, a very peculiar pleasure —akin to that of following a river from its source to the sea—in getting to know the different physiognomy, the different mode of being, of various mountainous or hilly regions. Walking on the terrace of the villa with the African traveller (who disdained to take a part in any of our excursions), I was able to guess how immensely, and in a way super-humanly, personal, the genealogy, biography, and way of being of localities and districts must become in the light of science ; just by a word here and there, accompanied by a nod in the direction of

the hills around, or the plain below, or the misty gap where the Alps should be, he was able to make me realize that the geologist and geographer have secrets and have emotions like those of the historical student. These hills had for him an additional and (however unconscious) imaginative interest, not unlike that with which I sometimes caught myself, seated at table with my friends, suddenly conscious that these dear modern people—my kind old host and charming young hostess, the very unmediæval Knight of Malta, the traveller himself, and, oddest perhaps, my excellent friend Francesco, the radical economist, are the representatives of alpine feudatories, of a famous Umbrian condottiere, and of the most tragic victims of Venetian statecraft.

But, quite apart from any such scientific, so to speak, genealogical knowledge of hills and mountains, one can take in them the interest awakened by well-defined human types, families, or individuals. One notes the difference, not only of outline, rounded or broken into facets, but of the steepness or flatness, telling of mosses and bogs, or of streams washing the earth from the

ridges; the difference, naturally, in the depth and darkness of valleys, shelving or abrupt, and in their intricacy; these Euganeans, for instance, making one understand where Mantegna, living as he did in their city of Padua, came by his fantastic perspectives of streams and roads twisting like dragon's tails round some great scaly rock.

We turned and twisted along just such roads —enclosed, secluded, the whole hill-range so extraordinarily cut off from all the world, so self-containing—every time we took a drive. The first time it was to see the ruins of a castle, become almost indistinguishable from the rocks, which had belonged to those tyrants of Padua, of whom my hosts are the direct descendants. At the end of the twisting valleys there was something white in the blue plain, Padua; and beyond, a long light line, the Adriatic; and immediately below us, in the deep russet precipice, two great hawks were circling. The Serene Republic, which proscribed the very name, had taken care that nothing should remain of the doomed family's castle.

Another day I was taken to see a former Benedictine monastery at Praglia. It was odd

suddenly to find in one of these rural valley corners a great cruciform Renaissance church, with colossal flights of steps, like those in Titian's Presentation at the Temple. In the immense nave only a few peasants were singing the evening responses—women mostly—in that guttural middle voice, sexless but so natural, which has the pleasant bitterness of hillside herbs. From the little pillared loggia of the deserted monastery there was a view of exquisite solemn sweetness: russet and yellow, very pale, of hillside scrub; lines of vineyard, trailing perfect festoons of coppery rose; grass aftermath beneath, with young grey calves and flocks of turkeys feeding. And, above the great barn-roofs, the loveliest of hillsides! a thin growth of olives, with here and there a cypress above the rose and orange brushwood among the rocks. These steep Euganean valleys are set with villas of characteristic Venetian, eighteenth-century shape, like those of the Giudecca and the Lido, and here and there a delicate white steeple sprouts out of the rock. It was Sunday, and in one of the little villages a band was playing under a vine-trellis, men and girls dancing to it very

gracefully : this poor Italian peasantry, taxed to the bone, has wonderful sunshine and oxygen in its soul, which keep it serene even when starving.

We always talked a great deal about the peasants, about the corn laws and militarism, my dear Francesco and I ; and I had quite forgotten, the other afternoon, where he was taking me in the jingling cart. We got out at some farms, and slowly climbed the grass path up the smallest, most isolated of those Euganeans —barely a bubble in the plain. But at a turning of the path my interest in politics and economy suddenly went out : we were in romance, in the fairyland of Italian poetry. Imagine (and I seemed imagining rather than walking in reality) a mediæval castle of the Scaligers, perfect with battlemented walls, circular like its rock, but a castle turning magically into a villa such as d'Annunzio has made immortal ; great cypresses marking the moat, and the steep paths from the plain ; a formal garden reached by the drawbridge ; steps and balustrades filling up everywhere the angles of the fortress ; lemon and *gaggia* houses nestling under the walls ; and a whole people of statues standing sentry

on high, profiled against the castle. And all these things at such angles as to make perfect pictures: towers, battlements, cypresses, statues all perspectived not merely for the eye but for the imagination, compelling each back into that charmed circle, so that the impressions of Ezzelino's Castle (for it was Ezzelino's also) and of Armida's garden interchange, interlace like theme with theme in a subtle piece of music, enclosing the soul and subduing it in a maze of romance and beauty.

The evening was misty; the Euganean cones and the little hills of Vicenza were barely outlined; long curls of smoke lying in the vague autumn yellow of the plain; pale red filaments veining the sky; everything was undefined, with an air of *nowhere*, out of which the castle, the gardens, towers, Ghibelline battlements, statues, lemon-trees, and great cypresses alone emerged, filling the eye and the fancy.

A few bats began to hover; the drawbridge, over which we had crossed, rose again behind us with a gentle movement like a bird's wing. It was twilight, and a minute or two later the castle had vanished.

"You are very late for tea," said my charming

young hostess, "and I suppose *they* did not give you any."

"They?" I asked vaguely.

"The people at the castle, of course. You don't mean to say you didn't call on them? Didn't Francesco tell you it belonged to the *inlaws* of your friend Theodora M——?"

I went to the fire with my cup in my hand. A little shiver, not merely of cold went through me.

"The castle, my dear Maria, does not really exist," I answered, "and therefore it cannot belong to anybody's *inlaws*—the castle I have just come from."

THE HOSPITALITY OF THE BLACK MADONNA

ON the top of Monte Mucrone, the highest of the mountains separating the plain of Piedmont from the valley of Monte Rosa, the Black Madonna entertains her devotees with magnificent hospitality. After climbing up and up and up between great chestnut woods and tender Alpine lawns, with a pure white stream rushing incalculable miles an hour downhill under the box hedges and the arcaded cottages and past the white steeples and painted churches along the road, you come quite suddenly to more solemn groves of beech dotted with circular chapels, and, emerging from them, find yourself in the bare and crater-like hollow of the mountain, and in front of a triple row of great porticoed palaces, a sort of Italian Versailles.

This is the Sanctuary of Oropa, the residence of the great Black Madonna, whose portrait is painted on all the houses of that district. She

can give hospitality, I am told, and can easily believe, to more than a thousand pilgrims. To Dukes of Savoy and Kings of Sardinia, and all manner of Lombard Archdukes and similar high personages in the magnificent seventeenth-century buildings and wings over the court of honour and the majestic flights of stairs, where her effigy, in a golden-metal sun, surmounts the gates like a weather-vane. And hospitality to endless smaller folk in the cells opening on to the double cloisters of the immense inner yard or square. I did not see the state-rooms at Oropa, for (one of the strangest circumstances about this strange place) there was no one anywhere to show one anything. But, for that very reason, I roamed freely about the endless cloistered corridors on to which open the innumerable rooms, each with two or three colossal beds, intended for the humbler pilgrims, corridors and rooms all numbered and inscribed with names of patron saints. Huge mattresses were airing in the yard (which is the size of a large city square), and immense frowsy-looking coverlets, enough to cover six, hanging on the parapets in the sun, uninviting objects at the first glance, but which discovered themselves to

be of fine-patterned seventeenth-century cotton or hemp brocade of faded russet or green.

The Black Madonna, like all the French and Italian great folk of the past — Rousseau's friends of whom he so bitterly complains and the Duchesse du Maine, Louis XIV.'s bastard's wife, at Sceaux—the Black Madonna lodges, but does not board her guests. But on either side of the great triumphal staircase are spread out vast eating-houses — Croce Biancas and Croce Rossas, with swinging signs and white-covered tables, among oleanders in tubs, and *caffès* and *Birrerias* and *Bigliardos*; and humbler ones are nested even in the central portico, under the great metal sun and the huge metal monogram of the Black Madonna; and with them shops of all kinds—perfumers, tobacconists, stationers, newspaper vendors, and barbers —everything which the pious of various classes can want for use or pleasure. And, indeed, the approach to the hospice, even before you see it, is marked not merely by white and pillared chapels (like things in frescoes by Pinturicchio or Signorelli), but by wooden booths, chockful of rosaries, medals, painted votive candles, scapulars, and *ricordos*, of all kinds, of

Oropa and its Madonna; booths where, I am happy to say, there is also a splendid show of indiarubber-balls, tin railways and tramways, dolls, and toys of every sort, so that the children at home may get a good impression of the great Black Virgin whom the parents have left home and them to visit.

The priests and sacristans were busy preparing for a coming pilgrimage and festivity; so I could not be shown the Black Madonna. And, on the whole, I was better pleased. No visible presence could have come up to the sense of her invisible immanence. Everything for her and through her; the whole church, the sacristies, the lumber-rooms, even the damp, dark passages, panelled with votive pictures from floor to ceiling—nay, the very ceilings themselves hung round. The oldest were dark, stained canvases showing bedrooms with Louis XIV. worthies in bed under canopies and storied periwigs; nay, there were some in Elizabethan ruffs. Then came every conceivable thing susceptible of being framed and glazed: oils, water-colours, prints, pictures made of locks of hair, and touching bead-samplers, down to the modernest form of

ex-voto : photographic family groups, with a little Black Madonna let into the corner of the negative, heaven opening in the photographer's studio. The Black Madonna indeed presides over only very earthly things : people in bed, people under runaway horses, people upsetting in boats, falling out of third-floor windows, or escaping from fires ; at best, funny little smug parents, kneeling and pointing to the cradle which the Black Madonna has filled. The Black Madonna, not unlike a swaddled infant, of a Byzantine cast, herself, always in the sky in the corner, but apparently fetching and carrying only for material advantages and escapes. Spiritual wants seem altogether outside her capacities ; indeed, it is strange how completely the inhabitants of Heaven are regarded as adjuncts to mere temporal convenience in all places of pilgrimage. Yet, when one has been in this votive church a little time, one recognizes that this is all more heart-stirring than any mere disinterested piety. One is overwhelmed by the sense, not of so much faith, but rather of so many passionate human demands producing it : fear of death, fright of danger, and man and woman's love,

and clinging to kindred and desire for offspring —all this vast chorus of common human egoistic passions which has risen up for generations and generations from this strange place of prayer so solitary in the lap of the Alps.

Rising up whither? Going out of that church, black with smoked votive pictures, I was dazzled by the brilliance of the sky and the sparkle—stony, inexorable—of the great peaks of that amphitheatre of rock which the vast yard of the hospice encloses with its buildings, even as the side scenes of the stage enclose the painted background, sky, and rocks, and sailing clouds. All seems so pure, so spiritual, compared with this pullulation of human prayers; so coldly, brightly uncontaminated by all these miseries.

I could not go into that church again. But passing out of the porticoed yards, I climbed a few minutes up, in the wake of a school of grey orphan girls and of some nuns and black-dressed women with conspicuous rosaries, apparently carrying their luncheon up into the mountains. And then, emerging, I discovered what that wonderful stage effect of the hospice roofs and porticos had hidden:

under the great bare peaks of shining granite, a wide amphitheatre of meadow and short beechwoods, with a torrent and little white foaming brooks rushing across, and châlets here and there with cows, and everywhere on the open pasture green or in the dark green groves, innumerable little lanterned chapels with circular porticos, like things from fifteenth-century frescoes ; a country of keenest air and freshest, tenderest grass still uncut, and mossy boulders embedded in flowers, and a perpetual bubble of waters.

It is very grand of the Black Madonna, I reflected, to have chosen just such a spot for the country house where she magnificently lodges rich and poor to the number of more than a thousand. But one wishes, somehow, it had not been she. One wishes the place might have belonged to some calm, classic Æsculapius or Hygeia, with no fusty church stacked with votive pictures and blackened with votive candles. I should have liked rites of some outdoor kind : religiously processional, but not in any way superstitious ; rites of exercise and meditation, but serene and clear-minded, healing the spirit as well as the body

by use of these pure waters, this cold and crystal air and bright sun, by life with these rocks and woods and pastures, and the unwearied clouds ; rites in which personal demands should be forgotten, and impersonal contemplation should replace them. . . .

Thinking these things I turned away from that Alpine amphitheatre, looked back to whence I had come, and forgot all cavillings. Before me were the spread-out roofs and cupolas, grey slate, sparkling granite, of the hospice ; and over them, over the Madonna's monogram and the metal sun on the big gateway, were, not green hillsides and rocks and clouds as one expected, but, merging into a milky blue sky, lay a blue, delicate, inconceivable sea. Yes, a sea ; but a sea without sparkles, and with luminous white curdlings which were rivers : the great plain of Lombardy barely separated from the heavens by the pale line of Genoese Apennines ; all blue, blue, of incomparable, unspeakable blue against the silvery roofs and walls of the hospice.

After all, I said to myself, as I walked slowly down the hill, *they* can afford to let the Black Madonna think she is the only potentate.

THE HOLY YEAR AT RAVENNA

PERSONS of literary genius, or thereabouts, I reflected that rainy day at Ravenna, are always doing us good turns ; and perhaps not more in furnishing us delightful masterpieces than in showing us how to make up little vague works of our own, felt, not written, out of the scrappy stuff of our own life and reading. Geniuses are people who amuse themselves enormously and incidentally teach us persons without genius though we are, to play at the games of their invention. In the middle of the game (of which the trump card was somehow the year 1900) which was making that wet day in a provincial town so very enchanting, I felt a vague warmth of recognition, and there ensued the knowledge that I owed it all to M. Anatole France—the Anatole France, at least, of the immortal trilogy of dear Bergeret ; and the sense of it added further to my pleasure.

The Enchanted Woods

It may surprise some that I should describe Ravenna as a provincial town. But to me it is one. I do not think very often about Dante, whose bones they stole and mislaid at some distant period; nor about Byron, except in so far that I once met his left-hand brother-in-law, one of those Gambas who took him to Greece and glory, a very fascinating old man. Nor even about Theodoric, though I confess that his house, with pillared windows, may be for something in my preference for that ill-paved street leading to the port and marshes, excruciating as it is to a bicycle; at least, before they wrenched the porphyry sarcophagus out of the masonry and took it to the town museum, worse luck to them! To me, who have lived there much, Ravenna is a very proper provincial town, with a prefect and a professor of botany who is an original; and a market place, full in this snowy weather of farmers in furred cloaks and *condottiere* caps. Also a lending library, instituted by my friend, and Socialists, and the "Industry of Beetroot Sugar," so much talked over; and a dear familiar house, well warmed and full of books, with family traditions, boys' exams., ravishing toilettes often, and political

gnashing of teeth occasionally; the whole presided over for my fancy by a mysterious person in the lower regions, never seen, but heard of as "restuffer of wool mattresses and bringer-up of truffle-hunting dogs." And from this house there radiates through the town great luminous beams and dust of gossip, discussion, biography, legend (Garibaldi and Pio Nono, and even the Serene Republic of Venice, whose daughters, married by proxy, came to Ravenna by the lagoon barge)—a halo of present or quasi-present, mingling gradually in the darkness of Exarchs and Ostrogoths and confused Middle Ages. I always loved the mixture, but never so much as this particular December Sunday, when I caught myself playing the game of Anatole France, in the looming shadow of the new century.

The weather was really atrocious. Vague black Pious Women (the cultivation of piety their sole profession) were shaking wet umbrellas in the church porches; and when you entered, your first impression was of damp pavement and little constellations of taper-lights in a steaming twilight tasting of incense. In that particular church, whose name I always

forget, at a forlorn street-corner (it has a round archaic belfry seeming to penetrate into the mist of centuries and centuries) I found the evening benediction just ending. The Byzantine columns are all encased in florid plaster; the only object of interest there, is a small bas-relief of the fifth century, with an Adoration of the Magi almost identical in arrangement with the Corybantes' Dance before Cybele. I had made that archæological remark mentally, for the tenth or eleventh time, and found no sort of satisfaction in it, when my eye was caught by a large railway poster near the door, with time-table and price list for the trains to Rome on the occasion of His Holiness's solemn opening of the Holy Year Nineteen Hundred. . . . The church was getting dark, most of the print was small, and, moreover, the Pious Women with soaked umbrellas, each stopped to take a long deep stare at me before pushing out through the leathern door. I felt I did not look as if I genuinely wanted to know the price of those tickets, and that I couldn't have made the Pious Women understand why I really did; so I got shy, and tore myself away, and out into the rain, repeating rather wistfully within myself,

The Holy Year at Ravenna

"Opening of the Holy Year Nineteen Hundred. . . . Pope Leo XIII.—first-class tickets by Bologna and Florence, or by Forli and Ancona"—and a vague feeling welled up, with words on its surface, which proved to be German, a verse, I believe, of Schiller, "und nun an dies Jahrhundert's ernstem Ende."

Out in the streets it had begun to snow. Wild weather coming; and the day before, driving towards the pine forest with my hostess (the pine forest of Boccaccio's and Dryden's spectre hunt), and past the famous beet-root sugar refinery they are building at Classis, we had seen the ploughed fields snowed over with seagulls, harbingers of real snow.

I found there was to be a dinner-party of notabilities somewhat difficult to manage. While questions of precedence were being discussed at tea-time, my host, appealed to on the matter, brought out a volume of Baronius's "Annals," a very fine edition, quarto, in vellum, with dedication to Paul V.; and began to read out loud the year 1300, like this coming 1900, a Holy Year, indeed the first officially such. Pilgrims were flocking to Rome spontaneously (among them, it is surmised, Dante) in such

numbers that the reigning Pontiff granted wholesale indulgence to dead and living. "Moreover, it was stated by the demons vociferating from the mouths of possessed persons . . . that through the merits of the said Apostles Peter and Paul all souls in purgatory would be liberated from torments, and even enabled to attain immediately to glory." Demons, it seems, were quoted as experts in such matters, as we quote doctors and graphologists nowadays.

Then followed, always in Baronius (Dominus Cæsar, S.E.R. Cardinalis ac Bibliothecarius), a story of a certain clerk, at St. George of the Golden Veil, to whom there appeared, all crowned with stars and in resplendent robes, Mary, Diva Deipara, with her Son on her knees. "To all men," spoke the vision, "God mercifully gives indulgence." "And to me, then?" hastily asked the clerk, prostrating himself as fast as possible. The Diva Deipara let a moment pass. "To all men, living and dead," she solemnly repeated. "And to me, then?" insisted the clericus, by no means satisfied with general statements. Again the Virgin let a little time pass, and answered

slowly, evidently taking a certain pleasure in the poor clerk's flustered condition. "To all men . . . dead and living . . . and . . . to thee also."

"Omnibus mortuis et vivis," repeated my host in his sonorous Italian Latin, "but not to the King of France or the Colonnas, Pope Boniface was careful to mention; which perhaps accounts for Guillaume de Nogaret's mission, and Sciarra Colonna's famous box on the ear at Anagni."

The political dinner went off, thank Heaven, satisfactorily; a good deal was said about beet-root sugar; the Sicilian deputy's trial for murder was alluded to, and the notabilities were pretty unanimous in foretelling some capital days of wild-duck shooting and snaring in the salt marsh, for the snow was falling quite thick. Next day indeed came the extra-ordinary experience of wading through a little snowfield to see the alabaster Byzantine altar they have set up against the green and gold mosaics, Justinian and Theodora, grapes and peacocks, at San Vitale.

But there was no poster there. I mean no railway time-table for the opening of the Holy

Year; and that was what I really wanted. I found one, though, in a certain church down a dark corridor: a small basilica, most primitive and empty, icy, as if no living thing, not even a Pious Woman, had breathed into its chillness for a thousand years. There it was, nailed against a pillar, near the marble ambon. "Pilgrimage to Rome on occasion of the solemn ceremony of opening the Holy Year to be held by the Holy Father Pope Leo XIII., in the Vatican Basilica, the twenty-fourth December, 1899. Price of return tickets to Rome from the following stations: Ravenna, 16 f. 5 c., third-class; 28 f. 10 c., second-class; 49 f. 10 c., first-class. Forli, Rimini, Cesena," a little less. A cat, startling me very much, ran across the nave. The bells, in the Byzantine belfry, began to ring. I became aware that I wanted some afternoon tea quite madly.

All along the snowy streets my thoughts danced in tumultuous yet orderly pattern. I thought of the dinner of notables, and how cold they must all be shooting their wild-duck in the marsh. Forty-nine francs—was it really much reduction, seeing that "the maternal kindness of the Church was opening the

inexhaustible treasure of indulgence"? Could that certain clerk at St. George of the Golden Veil have afforded it? Perhaps he would have gone third-class, or made a financial effort. Centuries do not come to an end every day. Speaking of centuries ending, I realized that I had a little dreaded the end of this one. Schiller's "und nun an dies Jahrhundert's ernstem Ende," and so forth; and also that, now that it was close at hand, I felt quite comfortable and singularly at peace with the world and its contents. The spirit of M. Anatole France was abroad; and I thanked the literary temperament for teaching me to make pleasant patterns of contemplation even out of centuries that are departing.

THE GENERALIFE

THE very little I have seen of Spain is Moorish; but Moorish with the sadness of the Moors' destruction; Africa, one might say, revenging herself on that cruel Spain and rendering it so oddly sterile of all things good. I was ill at the time, and saw it all through my melancholy; but there are realities which answer to most of our moods, perceptible only through them; and this, also, was, I think, a side of Spain's reality.

But a reality isolated from all others, and different. Made unlikely, moreover, by rising out of the chaos of a long sea journey; five nights and days like nights, when, opening unwilling eyes, they closed again over a glimpse of deck tipping down into the water, or deck rising like a wall underneath it; of foam monsters swimming hand-in-hand, like companies of Japanese bogeys, round the ship's

bulwarks—nay, above them. Black emptiness, vague nightmare for those endless days and nights, with reminiscences, for all reality, of recent wintry Northern scenes. And then emergence, land, the South, an unfamiliar South which seemed like Africa.

We rode under a blazing sun, through the dustheaps of some Spanish villages, along the beach where the mules are driven in the sea for better going, and then inland, along a dusty, rugged track between high aloes and cactuses and great scarlet flowers like red-hot pokers. A dreary country of rolling purple earth, ploughed by the savage-looking brown cattle, with low dusky hills at the end, with the sullen clouds resting upon them. There is something unspeakably arid in the violet, almost lilac colour of that earth, as if it had been baked into barrenness ; an expression taken up by the steel blue of the aloes, the grey of the scant eucalyptus, the trembling white of the few stunted poplars ; by the sharp, jagged forms of this vegetation which looks—aloes with thin long lances of dead flower, and prickly pears with their battered shield-like discs—as if it were all for warfare and desolation.

The Generalife

The desolation, as I remarked before, seems to belong to the Spaniards, rightful owners, aborigines of this unkind-looking country; while the few spots of sweetness and grace are made by the Moors—left by them in an alien land when they were banished. One feels as much about every little fruitful gap in those endless miles of stony hill and plateau, oases of orange trees and sugar canes, with the great cranes of wells rising among them; I felt it also even of the market gardens round Malaga and Seville, where we bought lemons and winter roses: the Moors must have made them. An impression, most likely, radiating from the real gardens, which one knows to have been Moorish, or laid out, like those of the Alcazar, by Moorish architects and gardeners for almost Moorish Spanish kings.

A wonderfully peaceful place, that Alcazar garden watched over by the great Moorish lattice-work tower of the cathedral, and by its own high, slender palm trees; a *hortus inclusus* in the best sense, where the winter sun lies on the myrtle hedges and on the blue-and-green tiled paths strewn with fragrant, dry fig-leaves. In it one naturally remembers that Rhodes and

Damascus—names to conjure with !—are much on the same line, and somehow seem near (with the palm trees brought from them) ; and one muses on serene mediæval days, learned Saracen leeches, and Jewish philosophers, verses of Omar Khayyám coming into one's head. Spanish Spain with bullfights and cigarettes, Seville of Don Juan and Figaro, has nothing to say to these Moorish gardens ; has closed them in, or rather closed *them out of herself*, into peacefulness and gentle decay.

This is, of course, very much the feeling of the Generalife above Grenada. I say *its* feeling, not merely mine about it ; because places like these have moods and emotions on their account, seem to feel something which they transmit to us. Only the Generalife has an added quality of romance, its terraces and hedged paths, and little porticos and fountains overhanging, in their charmed regularity, the stony, savage gorge of the Darro ; overlooking the red towers and creeping walls of the Alhambra. And then, beyond, the solemn blue plain, and the peaks and everlasting snows of the Sierra.

Far more than the Alhambra itself, which

savours too much of the show-place, Palace of the Cæsars or Hadrian's villa, this little Generalife has kept the poetry of Moorish Spain. Partly also because of its small size, and mainly, of course, because it is, if not inhabited, at least inhabitable, and belongs to a private individual descended in direct line from its original owners.

That is the fascination: this odd, unlikely fact, this bridging of the chasm between past and present, modern Christendom and that vanished Islam; realizing it, one feels rather as in the presence of persons intermarried with ghosts. In the little palace—the casino of the villa, it would be styled in Italy—above solemn, high-backed chairs, hang the portraits of the ancestors of the present proprietor, the Marquis of Campotejar. Also their genealogical tree. They are all descended from Don Pedro de Grenada, son of Cidi Yahya, son of King Juzef of Almeria; descended through the Kings of Granada from the Kings of Saragossa and Cordova, and also certain Gothic kings; they are connected by marriage with the wife of Charlemagne, and with Marsilius of Saragossa, *the* Marsilius of the "Chanson de Roland" and

of Ariosto! And there is the first Don Pedro, this son of Cidi Yahya, in armour, a red cross on his breast, and a dead Moor—a thing like the "Saracen's Head"—at his feet; and the device, with the pomegranate of Granada, "Servire Deo regnare est." Then there are Alonzos, Pedros, Estebans, warriors and knights of Malta and of Calatrava; and finally a little boy, like a baby by Bronzino, in a go-cart, with the words, "murio niño;" and with him died the male line of the House of Granada. There were also dignitaries of the Church, of course; and some nuns; one particularly. And I wondered, vaguely, whether in such a family strange things might not have happened, in the style of Goethe's "Bride of Corinth;" some ghostly Moorish betrothed, coming, perhaps, to fetch away the daughter of the Renegades, even from behind the convent gratings, somewhere, perhaps, in the days chronicled by Mme. d'Aulnoy, or when, later still, Spain was governed by Signor Farinelli, with Don Ferdinand of Bourbon under him. . . . These Moorish renegade princes often had very beautiful names in their Christian days, like these Granada Vinegas of the Generalife, and

the Valor y Cordobas, of whom Don Francisco threw Christianity and Spain to the winds, and rebelled and perished in the Alpujarra under the name of Aben Humeya. Strange things to think about, phantasmagoric notions, elusive, impossible to define, which haunted the little palace looking down on to the precipice, the gardens with their slender fountains and horseshoe porticoes. The place was full of the scent, sweet but medicinal, of that winter blossom which covers its bare twigs with pale yellow, dried-up looking stars; and from the gardener's house there rose into the damp warm air that subtler perfume still of burning olive branches or vine stumps, I cannot tell which.

I bade farewell to that Spain of the Moors in the same unreal and dreamlike mood. We had gone on board at the wharf of the Golden Tower at Seville before it was daylight. As the boat moved down the stream, the blue darkness of the night became paler by a sort of infiltration of light; and then there began to emerge misty lines of poplars, scarce more substantial than the curdling grey water under the boat; and every now and then white buildings

glared supernaturally out of the greyness of the banks and hills. Then suddenly, above the misty marshland and feathery trees, daylight; and on it, at a bend of the river, the steeples and cupolas of Seville for the last time, the cap of the Golden Tower, and pinnacles of the Giralda. And later, when the sun was already high, there appeared, higher than the sun, and isolated on the pale blue, a double-crested cloud, baseless and resting in the sky: the twin snow-peaks, Mulhacen and the Picacho, of the mountains of Granada.

COUCI-LE-CHÂTEAU

THE sadness of the French *sous-préfecture*—at least of Laon! There are few contrasts so dreary as stopping there immediately after Switzerland, with its continuity of well-to-do-ness, and the something elemental and fresh, as of unshorn pasture and pellucid rushing streams, about its spick-and-span old towns and villages.

The evening of our arrival at Laon, the hopelessness of provincial France descended deep and heavy into my soul. We walked at sunset through the dull hillside town, and along the avenues which have replaced its walls, passing a desolate-looking Louis XIV. barracks, dormered and escutcheoned, standing forlorn in a great sandy square. Abutting on the hillside boulevards there were lane-like streets of aristocratic houses with lovely slate roofs, but all close-shuttered, deserted, dead-looking,

and the elms and horse-chestnuts of their gardens were fitly reduced to skeletons by the past heat; an autumn in midsummer, trees barely outlined in brown featheriness, with a soft cinder of dry leaves underfoot.

A wonderful tragic sunset took place: crimson first, then livid among great piled-up Alps of cloud, above the endless plain of reaped field and flattened forest. Such great plains are sad, where the incident, whatever gives interest, is due to changing, almost unreal things; where the mountains are mere perishable clouds, and all that fancy clings to is mere passing show. It was dusk when we found our way, after that great circuit of the hill town, under the cathedral. Looking up over the low roofs of the beautiful Gothic chapterhouse, at whose corner there is a sundial held by what was once a great angel, his robe and the tip of his wing; looking up, climbing up the looming, inconceivably high side of the great towers, one's eyes and soul seemed to travel far into the storm-washed evening sky; suddenly meeting, there at the top, the downward-peering heads of the gigantic stone cows leaning out from the openwork of the belfries.

Couci-le-Château

But the next day France was kind and dear once more. For we spent it at Couci. There was a long slow journey on the platform of a little local train through the deep woods, among the great poplar groves, with glimpses of glassy, reedy canals and lovely marshland starred with big white flowers ; a journey so slow, so silent and peaceful, and in soft rain, which somehow made it merely more intimate, making one penetrate, as it seemed, into that country's secret. Couci is on a hill above that woodland : a little town of old houses of fine white stone, great Louis XIV. roofs of violet slate, and every here and there—inserted in the masonry —a bit of Gothic tracery. A little town, a village almost, among the orchards and flower-gardens enclosed in the great yellow-towered wall ; typical—like Loches, Chinon, Tonnerre, Montreuil in Picardy, St. Florentin on the march of Burgundy and Champagne, and a hundred other places I hope some day to know, of what is characteristically good and charming in Northern France. Bringing home to one the modest happiness which prosperity can bring in a temperate climate on fertile soil ; the kindly human side, as opposed to the

stagnation and selfishness of broken-up property and remote provincialism.

How Stevenson has understood this subdued cheerfulness of the small French country town! —a charm made up in part of the negation of the tragic or lyric, all greyish white and slate-colour like the old houses and the poplars by the streams; visited only by kindly suns and breezes and such light frosts as check over-luxuriance and prune vegetation, so to speak, into fine flower and fruit. I thought of Stevenson, and felt as if there were some story or essay of his perpetually escaping my memory, during the time I spent at the inn of Couci—Hôtel des Ruines—with beautifully flowering pomegranates and oleanders in tubs on the rough cobbles outside. It was left in charge of a delightful elderly *cuisinière* with that serious, smiling dignity which French provincial servants often have. There was also, having his mid-day meal at the opposite table, an old-world, gentleman-like person, spare and white-moustached, like an elderly cavalry officer, but, as it proved, employed in the "Contributions Indirectes"—to wit, salt and tobacco and such-like—who entered into conversation with us.

It started from a raven or jackdaw hopping familiarly about the inn dining-room; conversation of the kind so pleasant on a journey: a little about the antiquities of the place, the castle, mediæval wars, and so forth, and a good deal about harvests, vintages, *chasse*, woods, wildboar, birds; making the pleasant, natural business of life, ours and other creatures', even trees and bushes (for he talked forestry), abide a little while in one's leisurely imagination.

It rained hard, and for a while it was out of the question going to see the castle. But I felt peaceful and satisfied in the little inn parlour, looking at the cocked-hat roofs and white houses across the pomegranate and oleander blossoms before the windows. But not without occasional excursions among the family photographs belonging to Mme. Veuve François, as the framed diplomas with crowning goddesses and caduceuses and winged wheels, from "Sociétés des Voyageurs du Commerce," declared that deserving landlady to be called.

The castle, or what remains thereof, was really far the least among the attractions of Couci. Great gaunt ruins, bringing—when one had been led up and down and over and

under, and heard all the guide's archæology —an intolerable sense of the ferocity and monotony of that life, all offence and defence, all subordinated to the most hideous, because destructive, form of utilitarianism. No, no; the Middle Ages, well and good, of walled towns and turreted cathedrals; of a life, however often jeopardised, which had something in it worth fighting about. But all these warrens and rat-holes, once crammed with pseudo-chivalry, merely depress one with a sense of dreariness akin to that of the iron hives of modern industrialism; and what redeems them is the vegetation, the bushes, grasses, the rowans sprouting from broken walls, the harebells and wild peppermint carpeting the yards; in fact, Nature's efforts to cover it all up and hide it in oblivion.

Far more poetic than the ruins, there was a little flowery terrace behind the inn, overlooking the lustrous green-rolling country—a quiet little place with chairs and tables, and built, I have no doubt, of stones quarried in the great fortress; a most peaceful, pleasant spot.

And before leaving Couci altogether I found

another delightful place outside the gates—a path among the freshly reaped cornfields, which lie straight against the horizon in this country of old, old worn-down hills, the great white cumulus clouds resting on the line of stubble. One walked along a narrow path tufted with flowering purple thyme and saxifrage, and the song of larks descended from the washed blue sky.

Such places are companionable, and if, in them, the *genius loci* does not actually arise and meet and overwhelm the poor tired, fretted, wayfaring soul, yet one feels his vague hidden presence, reminding one that in this world, and apart from all human understanding or misunderstanding, there is no need for loneliness.

THE TAPESTRY AT ANGERS

AMONG the many pleasant things of travel, methinks we should include, as so much to the good, that which our fancy adds to places: impressions sometimes false, and expectations often disappointed. Our memory should hoard, for instance, a certain brief delightful moment when entering, say, some unknown town, and catching sight of a single picturesque feature or quaint detail, one feels, and even *sees* the rest to match. Unwarned, most likely, by sad experience, which teaches that perfect realities happen only once in a blue moon, in places you can count upon your fingers—like Rothenburg, or Siena, or Tangier, or, twenty years ago, alas! also Warwick.

Such a moment was that of my arrival at Angers, the capital, I hear, of the French Catholic revival, and as dreary assuredly as a novel of clerical life by M. Ferdinand Fabre.

For through the rattling windows of the hotel omnibus I caught a glimpse of a great Norman belfry, and, bringing my head on a level with my knees, I managed to see its pillared top. And a few minutes later appeared the castle: acres of walls and towers, colossal buttressed masonry based on rock, black and vaguely elephantine. I thrilled with the impression of Plantagenet and Shakspearean Angers, the very place for King John and Faulconbridge and poor little Arthur.

The disappointments which follow such experiences should not trouble us; unless insisted upon by our ill-humour, they disappear from memory, shrink, roll up into nothing, vanish like sleepless nights or boring days in trains, leaving no image behind them; and of the things that seemed to be, only the things which should have been remain. That first impressions of places, and sometimes first experience of persons, should sometimes be the most delightful, shows not that outer reality is poor, but that our powers of adding to it are rich; and this, rightly considered, is surely a subject for rejoicing. Neither should we let ourselves be put off by a more honourable aversion to

the unreal. In cases like these, where scientific or practical purposes do not require crude fact to deal with, what really exists is what we really feel. And we may calm our scruples by reflecting that mere chaos-mongering, mere void and shapeless dreams and mutterings, are incompatible with the sensitiveness to the world's suggestions and the instinct of meaningful reconstruction necessary for the seeing of clear and charming visions. Certain germs called facts have entered into our mind; and in our mind's own proper soil and climate, have grown, fertilized, and crossed and altered by natural necessities of growth. What does it matter if, by fate's accident, similar germs have grown to different shapes in other minds than ours, or even, as the mystics would have said, in the great thinking mind we call the universe? There are as many ways of singing a great song as there are singers, but *great* ones! and all the painters that ever have been have not exhausted the ways of painting rightly one single landscape; perhaps also there are united under one mortal's name as many different lovable persons as there are hearts to love them. And as to poetry, why, the very immortality of some of it,

of a line of Virgil, or a terzina of Dante, or a scene of Shakspeare, is due simply to each successive generation giving it a new lease of life in a new meaning.

These are metaphysic speculations, though by no means empty ones. But it is rather awkward, all the same, to descend from them, with directness yet grace, to the story of the Lion with Many Heads and the Fascinating Hydra on the Angers tapestry. The tapestry in question hangs all round the transepts and the single nave of that cathedral, built by Plantagenet kings ; and, with the two delightful blue and white rose windows, converts its dark gauntness into something suggestive of enchanted chambers. The work is fifteenth century, and its general effect as colour, what with fading and a mist of taper smoke and incense, is that of alternated carpets of greyish pink and pale blue, varied and interwoven to an occasional lovely lavender. The story it sets forth is, as stated, that of the many-headed lion and the fascinating she-dragon, belonging to a cycle of myths peculiar to arras-makers ; and nothing can exceed the fantastic charm of its presentation, or the weird humorousness of the expression : the she-dragon, also called a

hydra (for she has many swanlike necks), is a creature of infinite seductiveness. And there is a large composition, on a rose-coloured ground fleur de lysed with blue, of the poor beguiled lion, sitting on his tail, holding a ball and sceptre, and receiving most fatuously a whole posse of bigwigs introduced by the fascinating she-dragon, which is quite worthy of Walter Crane in the days of the "Yellow Dwarf."

I was unfortunately prevented from following the story to its conclusion, owing to the nave being occupied by a procession of little girls in muslin and elderly devotees in black alpaca, all carrying paper palms and apparently tied together by yards and yards of tulle ruches, starting from an image, which they carried, of the Madonna. I saw the little girls' eyes wandering towards the tapestry. But they had been too carefully brought up, methinks, to comprehend the full meaning of the story, and really believed, as little *demoiselles* should, that it was all about the triumph of the Church and the Theological Virtues; though some of them, perhaps, guessed that the Hydra was a lady not very *comme il faut*. When the procession—alpacca skirts, and muslin frocks and

tulle ruches, and purple canons, and scarlet *enfants de chœur*—had shuffled out little by little, I sat down on the carved flamboyant stairs of an overhead chapel, and watched some picturesque dark-blue nuns coming and going about the high altar, and folding and removing its linen and carpets. In the waning light and the incense cloud left by the recent service, the cathedral, with its bits of carving here and there, its battered monuments and uneven floor, its windows of beryl and sapphire, and its yards of rose-coloured and pale-blue arras, felt quite enchantingly furnished and inhabitable, so to speak, for the fancy. "It is quite impossible," I said to myself, "that people should have told the story of the Lion and the fascinating Hydra while really intending to convey the adventures of the Theological Virtues. Or, at all events——"

But at this point my eye rested on a curious Renaissance tomb in a corner of the transept. It was much battered and partially bricked up. The frieze consisted in a delicate garland looped up at intervals by a death's head, each with a name on a tablet: Alexander, Romulus, Semiramis, Hercules, Cleopatra, Rhea, none of them,

I should think, belonging to the family of the deceased. And meanwhile, underneath, the real inscription had been removed, and the name of the poor owner of the tomb replaced by a course of bricks! It was oddy ironical; and I felt that, in some subtle way, it all hinged on to my argument about imagination. Only I could not find the connection, for it was half-past seven, and the Suisse with his halberd hastily expelled me from the building. And not having returned to Angers since, I have never been able to recover the thread of those thoughts.

GERMANY ONCE MORE

HAVING bicycled through the Castle woods, getting off many times to enjoy the warm freshness of the afternoon, the sunlight filtered through the beeches, the flickers on last year's pink leaves, and the murmur and twitter amidst the pale tree stems, I found myself at the Neckar's edge, and crossed over by the ferry at Ziegelhausen. On the opposite bank, I descried, of course, a *Restauration*, as this very un-French institution is called; and sat down to some beer and black bread in a terraced garden overlooking the wide, sedgy river. Somebody was playing the piano in a neighbouring village house; and the one-two-three-four of an old-fashioned sonata mingled pleasantly with the lap of the water and the creak of the ferry chain.

One is apt to be a little irritated with Restaurations and Kaffeewirthschafts — every

legendary hollow in a forest, every rock commanding a view, every riverside, every ruin of the German-speaking world being furnished with such, from this flat, hot Neckar valley to the high places of the Engadine, where you drink chocolate in the shadow of the hoary, yellow-mossed larches and in the draught of a glacier stream ; and it is difficult, sometimes, to be quite fair to the Teutonic instinct for eating in every romantic moment, which culminates in the veal cutlets and preserved cranberries of the Wagner concerts at the Kaim-saal at Munich. And I, too, had been unjust. But sitting on that garden terrace over the Neckar, drinking my brown beer and eating my black bread while listening to the Clementi sonata and going over in memory my ride through the Heidelberg Castle woods, I was made (as is often the case) just and intelligent by happiness, and began to fathom the mystery of the German *Gemüth.*

Gemüth ! Untranslatable word, for whose modest, kindly spirituality, its suffused soulfulness, the other languages, with their logical and idealistic and practical pretentiousness, can never find any real equivalent.

Germany Once More

The Germans, among other forms of genius, possess, above all things, a genius for contemplation of an æsthetic, sentimental, yet homely kind. This constant marriage of creature comfort and emotion, of beer and romance is its expression; and music—yes, I fear not to say it—music is its offspring. By the side of their porcelain stove, and amid the fumes of savoury stewed sausage, they have ever dreamed of forests and of streams. The huntsman (not in our sense!), the poacher, and the wandering miller, as they speak in the music of Weber, and still more in the music of Schubert, have been for ever their heroes; the sound of jäger's horn mingling evermore with the clatter and plash of the mill in the world of Teutonic fancy; which world, as those divine songs truly remark, "is green." And similarly, they have always yearned towards a romantic past, "it beckons them out of old legends." And I wonder in what other country children have had sheets of coloured knights (not soldiers) to cut out, and the tower out of Schiller's "Robbers," with the old father being taken out of it, for their pasteboard theatres, as I can vouch

for German children—at all events, alas! of forty years ago.

It is this homely love of romance, this mixing up of what we priggish Anglo-Saxons and Latins call higher and lower forms of enjoyment, into one vague, permeating *wonne* (I must be allowed that German word, so soft, warm, comfortable, as compared with our meagre and ascetic *delight* or *rapture*); it is this spirit of roast veal in ruined castles, and coffee and cinnamon cake in haunted forest glades, which accounts for the Alpine landscapes and charming household details of Dürer and the Little Masters; accounts also for the lovable side of rough, dogmatic old Martin Luther; for the most fascinating though least Olympian parts of Faust; and nowadays for whatever is sane in the genius of Wagner. But perhaps there is no one completer illustration of it than the first volume of Jung Stilling's memoirs, which I happened to have in my pocket that day at Ziegelhausen, and which I opened at the ballad of the ghost of the ruined castle, and again at the love-story of the poor little niece of the "Christian Widow."

But to return to the German genius for music, and its relation to Restaurations and Kaffee-wirthschafts in romantic localities. Nations differ essentially, not merely in what they enjoy, but in their mode of taking enjoyment. Now the Germans, as I have said, enjoy themselves through several senses at once, in a confused, suffused, permeating manner which does away with definite images and thoughts (and hence with literature and the plastic arts as an adequate expression), but accumulates a vast bulk of indefinable emotion. Their feeling for the Rhine is typical of this. Passing along it from Mainz to Köln, the other day, it was borne in on me that the power of this great wizard among rivers lies, not in its beauty, for it is specially beautiful neither in line nor in colour, but in its pleasantness for the fancy: the peace and prosperity of the smooth, flowing water causeway from the Alps to the Northern Ocean, and of the wooded and vine-growing hills, of rich, old-world towns and villages; the knowledge also of its nixes, sprites and dragons, and robber castles safe in picturesque ruins. You cannot paint the Rhine, you cannot even

describe it, for picture or poem would leave out half the items and the whole delicious confusion of them. But you can set the Rhine to music. And as she has done by the Rhine, so Germany has done by all her deep, inexplicit emotion; making those indefinable moods of hers, sensual and spiritual at once, melancholy yet pleasant, into music complex and yet perfectly fused, indefinable and soul-subduing as they.

That evening, after returning home from Ziegelhausen, I joined my friends on the terrace of the Castle. The great ruined walls and towers, which are (to the un-Teutonic eye) decidedly ugly by daylight, loomed very grand and mysterious among the big, sweet-scented lime trees, the woods advancing to enfold them from behind; and in front, in the big gap where you feel that the Rhine is, the town lights made a fanciful glowworm network below. Soldiers and students, and townsfolk with all their children, were seated eating and drinking under the trees, while the band played Isolde's "Love-Death." And as we went home in the darkness, still warm and scented with resinous fir tree, we heard a chorus of

men's voices, and saw swaying yellow lights issue from the forest. The procession passed us down the steep wooded road : burly shadows with lanterns and big garlands, priests of the dear goddess of German enjoyment.

THE CARILLON

THERE had been a perfectly pure sunrise : a line of low houses, a white lighthouse, a piece of Holland, appearing in the light, and disappearing again into the mists and waters. Later, the lilac sea began to narrow into an estuary ; or, rather, lines of coast, marsh, villages, with little churches out of Flemish pictures and avenues of toy-box little trees, emerged out of the pale violet vapours, and were absorbed back by them. Occasionally, also, ships loomed, and yachts with white sails ; and, much more frequently, fine big barges with flowers and bird-cages and Dutch or Dutch-looking names. At a bend, suddenly, marsh and trees closer, and a seventeenth-century gabled house, much like an old line-of-battle ship. And at last, out of the depths of the lavender, luminous haze, a belfry ; and more ships, and dim wharves and houses, and

another spire, immensely high, of twisted lace work. Antwerp!

An Antwerp, alas! considerably imaginary, or one, at least, which, once on dry ground, and despite the museums and old streets I wearily trudged over, my imagination failed to make properly real. Indeed, that imaginary bygone Antwerp was most satisfactorily realized when I went back to my inn and looked out of its window; oddly enough, a window on to the yard.

For, sitting there and looking across, I saw steep roofs of lilac-grey, here and there daintily accentuated by a new vermilion tile; step gables and high chimney-stacks, and, over an almost vertically steep expanse of violet tile, the fanciful flamboyant spiral of the cathedral tower, the one the little masons are building up behind St. Barbara in Van Eyck's lovely drawing. And alongside of it an even more fantastic zinc bulb tower on two storeys of Noah's Ark window; the dearest and most preposterous of onion-shaped and scaled Teutonic pagodas, such as are the sign-manual of the race from the Danube to the Scheldt, from the Alps to the French frontier. Round these two belfries, set among the roofs and step gables, rose the

distant pinnacles of the cathedral apse ; a little domestic turret, brick with white courses, which Ruskin would have loved to draw ; and, madly improbable, the converging spiders' webs and white rosetted racks of the central telephone office. All in a perfectly fair blue autumn sky.

And the fantastic roof panorama took voice ; the sharp slopes of delicate grey, the sharp ridges of attic, the silvery bulb and the great pale open-work corkscrew, began to sing and speak. Every quarter of an hour a tinkle like the tuning of a giant mandoline, or the practising of a fabulous triangle ; and every hour and every half-hour a tune, an old-world jig or gavotte, shaken out falteringly, note clanking against note, as on some ancient spinet built by Rucker and magnified through dreams. It was the Carillon ; and it gave me back that imaginary, genuine Antwerp which had appeared and disappeared among the morning mists upon the river.

The carillon at Mechlin was even kinder to the *Genius Loci's* faithful votary. There is a dreary moment, well known and dreaded by all of us who worship that most coy of all divinities. A moment, in fact an hour, and

sometimes, alas! more (a silver cart-wheel being the usual token of this profanation, this arrant simony), which stress of time, or footsoreness, or dread of dislocation on a pavement scorning bicycles, or mere lack of moral courage, induces us, every now and then, to spend in the cab of alien lands. One is harrowed and mocked, even if the driver consents to silence, by an intuition that all the wrong streets are being taken and all the right points of view rumbled over; one would fain direct, stop, even get out, but one cannot; the condition of spiritual aridity, of conscious guilty estrangement from the Spirit of the Locality, reduces one to mere vacillating craven passiveness. It was thus with me at Mechlin. I drove and drove, and cursed myself for having got out at the station. A temporary liberation from the cab did me no good, and the cathedral —thin, liny Flemish-Gothic, relieved by Spanish black-and-white mortuary allegory—in no way helped to raise my spirits. Yet I loitered in its emptiness, simply because that cab was waiting at the front portal. When, hark!—something—was it sounds? or wind? I could not understand at first. It seemed to vibrate

through the vaultings and along the pillars; and it became vague music, mysteriously distant; organs or double basses everywhere, nowhere—Heaven knows where! And then I understood. It was the carillon! Up there; high, high above the church, the church's lofty cross-vaultings, and steep-pitched roof; the carillon in the sky.

As fast as I decently could I reached a side porch, the sound getting clearer and clearer as I emerged from behind one heavy leathern door after another. And outside, there it was! The big, beautiful square tower, ever so high, with the clock numbers like spiders' web upon its fine stone lace work (Mechlin, of the right material), was pouring out in all directions, like the rooks which flew from its crannies, a stream of bell music. Real music this time: some complicated catch, almost a fugue, of bygone days of ruffed and doubleted Flemish composers, Goudimel, Josquin des Prés, Orlando Lassus. So at least I thought, and chose to think. Perfectly pure tones and in perfect tune, but executed drowsily by some long extinct band of strings, or great magical harpsichord, jangling divinely.

Under the carillon's magic I had found Mechlin, and found my own soul. I did not return to the cab, leaving driver and horse to slumber at that front cathedral door. The one on whose steps I was standing overlooked a little side-square, with in it a quincunx of thin elms, their yellowing leaves floating down on to the gravel, surrounding a great, old-fashioned, vase-shaped lamp. Opposite, half hidden, some quiet, gabled houses of red brick; and, as I said, the cathedral tower above me, with the rooks swarming round it. The sky had grown faint grey, a few rain-drops began to fall, and with them the day to close in; children also began to return from school in little bands. I walked up and down in that little square, till the carillon music had ended, and the deep tones of the bells—the real bells—mingled in its closes. And then I seemed to recognize the houses, streets, even the cobble pavements, of Flemish seventeenth-century pictures, with that particular crape of rainy northern twilight they always have about them.

And I walked into that old world: quiet, tortuous streets with gables and long convent

walls, and canals at low water, with barges and a sail or two; outlines of castellated buildings, with funny turrets, over trees; Madonnas at every corner, and churches tucked away in stealthy seventeenth-century Germanic fashion (to please sick souls), down passages and behind walls; yes, and down a narrow, black lane, at such a church apse, a great, sad, German-looking Gethsemane, its big white figures shining mysteriously behind a grating. Moreover, as I retraced my steps, near the little quincunx of yellow elms, I found a discreet white house with a brass plate, "Kleermaker voor Priesters" —the dressmaker of priests! It seemed to sum it all up.

It was getting late, and I hastened back to the cab which was patiently waiting, passing through the Cathedral as if I had been there the whole time, instead of wandering on foot all over bygone Mechlin. As we crossed the big square on the way back to the station I heard for the last time, with a silly grateful emotion, the distant melodious jangle and crash of the carillon.

THE CARDINAL'S VILLA

I RECOGNIZED on the road from Viterbo to Bagnaia, and long before getting in sight of the Villa, that all this belonged to Rome. One cannot but be struck with the singular care displayed by the eternal players with living symbols in the *mise-en-scène* for the long miracle play—heroic, tragic, idyllic at the beginning, and not without its *Beggar's Opera* side—called the *Story of Rome*. No weary abrasions of primæval mountains into faint hillocks; no slow glacier grindings of valleys or leisurely silting of seas or depositing of river soil; but a brand new set of scenery, merely for that single drama of a few centuries, mere minutes in the Gods' eyes: volcanic cones suddenly upheaved, their fires still smouldering in the Tale of Cacus; lava streams instantly hardening into ridges, and craters filling with unexpected lakes; waters gushing everywhere into triumphal

fountains, and the very soil looking beforehand as if made up of charred cities and mouldered human bones.

It was the consistence of the earth which told me, even before the shapes of hills and houses, that I was back on Roman territory ; that odd light soil, lilac and friable like chemical manures, and so unlike all honest garden mould, which had puzzled and displeased me even in my childhood. I recognized its characteristic dust, shining grits, volcanic lapilli almost, as the spring wind whirled it in my eyes on that road to Bagnaia. The trees also, save the blossoming orchards, manifested already the Roman reluctance to grow up on the flat ; only a huge solitary cypress, or ilex, or umbrella pine at distances ; the world left to gigantic weeds and rosemary and fennel and wallflower and waving wild oats, bursting out everywhere from walls and rocks. Walls and rocks, moreover, difficult to tell from one another, and with that look already of excavated tombs or hermits' grottoes. And the abundance of waters ! The innumerable fountains of Viterbo ; and in the hills surrounding it, rills and springs and miniature Acqua Paolas gushing out everywhere.

But does not Rome begin already with the first volcanic hillocks at the southern gates of Siena ?

How districts repeat the same or similar phrases, even like the songs of one composer ! This road from Viterbo to Bagnaia is what the Via Flaminia outside Porta del Popolo must once have been, running straight between vignas flowering with cherry and peach, through deep, bushy cuttings in the yellow tufo, and with no sign of habitation save, at intervals, fine seventeenth-century *casini*, with steps and chapels, inscriptions and coats-of-arms, and gates all leading to nowhere. Roman also in the men in boots and green-lined coats loitering along, and riding straight in their stirrups on pack-horses. Then, at the end of this long, empty, empty road, a viaduct, like that of Lariccia done in small ; and beyond it a fortified place, towered, black, with a great loggia'd palace, gaunt, timed-stained, damp-eaten ; and then, triumphant on the flank of the chestnut-clad Cimino, the Villa Lante, tier upon tier, terrace above terrace, rising with groves and flights of steps cut out of the mountain above this squalid feudal village.

One wonders what those cardinals can have

felt like, rolling in their coach or carried in their mule litter, up to their place of delight through such black and stinking villages, gathered like dust-heaps below the villa gates. Perhaps that was the natural adjunct, the *sine qua non*, not merely the expression of how great part of their wealth had been got ; and, to these magnificent persons of rather thick-set than delicate æstheticism, almost a desirable contrast. For they were men of colossal, solid selfishness and far-fetched grossness and vanity, robust of all their appetites, intellectual as well as fleshly ; wholly unsqueamish and able to digest unlimited good fortune and glory of their own, and quite incapable of feeling the peas or stones or vermin in other folks' bed so long as the rose-leaves were smooth in their own great plumed and valanced four-poster. Men, like this Io : Franc : Card : Gambara, who has left himself thus in colossal letters all over the villa of Bagnaia, whose ostentation was so self-satisfied and quiet, as to lose, like their huge escutcheons repeated everywhere in stone or greenery, all vestige of vulgarity.

The realization of such a type has become impossible in our day. Our millionaires have

no more notion how to do this thing than our architects how to make volutes and triumphal arches, or our sculptors to model fountain gods. The æsthetic forms of the future tend to a certain moral decency. And the grasping, self-assertive human being, and all that pertains to him, will become, gradually (and very properly) mean instead of magnificent.

Magnificent! The full sense of that word, of the knowledge of what that great Purple One —*porporato* is the fitting Italian word—must have been, sinks into one while lingering in this wonderful place. The very work of time, the overgrownness of the trees, the moss on the staircase parapets, the lichen on the fountains, the very flowers bursting out between the blackened stones, seems merely so much additional pomp, all things obeying the whim of the great prelate who piled up the gardens and carried down the waters, and bade the groves be dense and shady. And after a little, one is invaded by the personality, the rustling grandeur of that Cardinal—Io: Franc: Gambara, or whoever he may have been—thoughtlessly, mercilessly, pouring out the wealth extorted from whole provinces of feudal labour

and countries full of superstition, in order to make a place like this.

Strange possibilities seem to arise in one. Methinks I knew that Cardinal. Years and years ago they dressed me up in crimson silk and diamonds, and I had a lip and a wig, and was the master of such a villa. . . . I might have been that Cardinal. Perhaps we might all have been; that down-at-heel, dusty American student trudging along the road from Viterbo might have been. Perhaps, after all, it was easy! But having walked through the grove beyond the terraces, looked over the broken wall and longed to get out on the stony paths among the leafless chestnut trees, up to the crest, feathery, rosy, of Mount Cimino, I felt also that I had walked out of such possibilities, left Io : Franc : Card : Gambara, far behind in the Past.

Coming back through the gardens, I met a baby in white cloak and bonnet toddling in the sunshine among the clipped hedges and the fountains. And from the windows of one of the two pavilions came the sound of laborious childish strumming—a piano-lesson. Something very different from what the cardinal, with his

Veronese and Bonifazio bands of singers and fiddlers, must have listened to as he sat at meat between the ladies, and the poets, and the learned men, and parti-coloured bullies of his court. Only the children are here, at present, said the gardener, with their governess. Certainly only children seem all right, nowadays, in that place of bygone pomp and splendour, among the ooze-bearded river gods and the mossy winged heraldic dragons. They can turn it all into plain, simple fairyland ; and it is purified, redeemed, by being played with.

IN GASCONY

I.

IT gives me the impression, this Gascony, with its sonorous names like battle-cries—Taillac, Layrac, Astaffort, Moirax, Miradoux, Lectoure, Bonencontre, and La Montjoie (of which anon)—it gives me the impression, more than any country I know, of having had all its past burnt and trodden down in never-ending wars—wars of Albigenses, English, Armagnacs, and Foix, wars of the Ligue and Henri IV., of Richelieu and the Fronde; all monuments, all traditions, all social differences effaced into remote and solitary undulations like those of its old, old, worn-down hills. When, in a desultory kind of way, the Convention (my friends speak of it, in this uneventful land, as if it had been last week) sent its Commissaire to Auch and Lectoure, there remained to guillotine only those cheerful and bony little *Cadets de Gascogne* (and in Gascony every one

was a younger son, or stepson, of Fortune), who, with nothing but their sword and their Rosinante, had gone to enlist in Musketeers or Gardes du Corps like the Great-Grandfather de C. . . . and the immortal d'Artagnan. Their castles are scarce distinguishable, save by thicker walls and oubliettes, from the farms which have not been castles; and the bearers of their names now live year in, year out, in the little white *bastides* behind the yellowing elms of the hilltops, between the seigneurial dovecot and the horsepond, leaving to parvenus almost as antiquated as themselves, the notary, the *receveur*, the retired wine-merchants, those pathetic little hotels hidden among the plane trees and the fruit walls, which everywhere replace the defences of these once warlike Gascon places.

But this destruction of all more obvious traces of any particular past seems merely to make this country the property of a vague "not to-day." Gascony has, more than any part of France I know, a kind of threadbare distinction, an *ancien régime* tattered grace. One remembers that it was here, near the Garonne, that Tristram Shandy dismounted his mule

and joined in the dance (with the coquettish lady of the torn placket-hole), singing to the tambourine, like the rustics in Jasmin's poems, "Viva la joya, fidon la tristeza"—or whatever is the correct Gascon therefor. One is surprised on climbing into these warlike-looking hill towns and villages (the pigeon-houses and deserted windmills doing military service) to find the iron cross at the entrance stacked round with flowers in tubs and pipkins, the black streets set at intervals with geraniums and coral trees among the refuse heaps, and their narrow squalor festooned with vines and scarlet-runners, as if in chronic festivity. There are coopers at work mending vats and barrels, whose last year's dregs stain the black gutters purple and fill the place with cheerful sour-sweet smell. There are little cafés under the plates which have replaced the walls and towers; and at La Montjoie, in the country of the Armagnacs, there is even a renowned *pâtisserie*. . . .

Its renown was so great that a treat there was the chief inducement held out by my Gascon friend to the little infantry captain and myself; though, to be sure, we were also

to see in the ancient church of the place a genuine finger of St. Louis, preserved in wine. The church was unluckily closed for repairs, and the finger of St. Louis not on view ; but that was a minor disappointment only to my hospitable friend after the two hours' drive he had brought us. How, as Sterne would have said, he did "*diable*" and "*mais sapristi*" over that cake-shop ! It was there, indeed, with white and rose oleanders at the door, and a large inscription, "*A la Source des Douceurs.*" But on most diligent search it was found to contain only a plateful of stale sugar biscuits, defying the tooth of time and man, a bottle of sticky brown syrup, and a large model of the church—all made of sugar, but not intended to be eaten. They only baked once a week, they replied, and when certain distinguished clients sent an order. And they nodded in the direction of the little pavilions, pepper-pot-roofed and veiled in creepers, on the former ramparts. . . . My poor host went away apologetic, furious, and crestfallen. But I, despite the taste for cakes which France awakens (with a tendency to politeness and eloquence) in my soul—I would not have given

that little shop, with its sugar church, that empty "*Source des Douceurs*," for all the cakes in Christendom. They bake cakes only once a week at La Montjoie; and what else have they done there, I wonder (besides yearly processions with the finger of St. Louis in wine), since Richelieu dismantled it? And that clarion name, La Montjoie!

II

The only monuments of this empty country, so hardly used by history, and where history has left so little trace, are the pigeon-houses remaining over from feudal times, not merely as convenience, but as a mark of privilege, the modern peasant building them because the *seigneur* built them in his grandfather's childhood; they make the shabby farmhouses seem the abode of nobles. As it is, they are the accent, the romance, in this singularly accentless and unromantic country: square isolated towers, with pointed slate caps, or veritable columbaria, making one dream of tombs along Roman ways. They rise up everywhere, and

add an odd suggestiveness to this sweet landscape, its long low lines against the cloudy, sunny sky, its patchwork of pale, faded colours: thin grass, lilac aftermath and cinnamon stubble, all harmonized like the crumpled folds of some piece of threadbare brocade worn by centuries of poverty.

These two days past I have been watching the pigeons, going in and out of a very beautiful dovecot alongside an old farm near Paraÿs. Pigeons of all colours, lilac, cinnamon and grey, like the autumnal country, puffing themselves out, purfling and trying their wings on the imbricated roof, broken by odd tiny attics. They seemed the only living creatures about the place; the others no doubt in the fields ploughing and sowing. And under the hedge, during that first visit, I found a poor violet pigeon, sick or disabled, motionless, passive, letting me take him in my hand, and barely ruffling his feathers with vexation. Coming back the same way a little later, I found the pigeon dying: his poor little eyes veiled and his wings spread on the grass, faintly beating it. And this morning, returning to see that charming dovecot, I could see under the

hedge hard by it only one little fluff of tender breast-feather.

The companions of the dead pigeon, mischievous creatures, were meanwhile spending their morning in a freshly ploughed and sowed field, some hundreds of them together. Looking at their greedy motions, one understands what the *droit de colombier* meant in feudal days to the peasant at whose expense the noble kept these gluttonous beauties. A shout from afar (or is it a hawk whom I fail to notice?), and they rise up, opening like a fan in the air. But only to flutter down again on the same ploughed field, a few yards off.

There was something exasperating in the thought of the sower's wasted trouble, more than his wasted seed. And while I felt inclined to shout, or throw stones at the pigeons, I have been pleasantly amused at the turkeys which, every now and then, have been having a grand time in the big fig-tree in front of my window. Flocks of turkeys innumerable, the real possessors of this depopulated country, of these freshly ploughed hillsides, these yellowing vineyards already swept by the autumn winds. The fig-tree stands in a bit of rough ground, fragrant

with dry peppermint. They leap up into its great branches with rustle of their watered silk skirts, much shrill talk, and the awkward dignity of dowagers.

The smaller birds waited for the opportunity of a rainy day; and very quietly, almost invisible among the big dripping leaves, had, I imagine, much more of a real meal; though they were as noiseless, save for a faint whistle now and then, as the birds carved among the stone leafage of a church porch.

Birds seem in their rights these days of north wind and fitful sunshine on these bleak, open slopes, where the yellow quinces and the medlars stand out of the hedges against the southern blue of the sky.

III

Ever since reading Loti's book about his childhood, I had been haunted by fragrant, fugitive visions of plums drying on mats in the sunshine. And one of my first thoughts on coming last year to Gascony was that I should see all that; for Agen prunes are among the few things, like Dr. Johnson's wall-fruit,

of which, in imagination at least, I had never had my fill. At last, yesterday, at the house of MM. de L——, I had it.

The prunes were lying in a high room in a wooden outhouse. Three great heaps of them —nay, rather lakes (for there was a look of depth in their smooth, dimpled, shining blackness)—on the cleanly swept wooden floor; rakes and baskets and spades and shovels, all those rustic things whose disorder is orderly and venerable, carefully banished into corners away from the prunes' solemn neighbourhood. The presence of the prunes had been borne in on us already at the foot of the wooden stairs, by an ineffable fragrance of ripeness, of incense, with just a delicious reminiscence of varnish, bringing beloved visions of Noah's arks and fir-trees out of toy boxes. Indeed, once realized, that presence seemed to permeate all things and follow one all over the establishment. We were shown the hurdles on which the plums are first dried in the sun; then the smaller triangular trays, like sieves of wattle, on which they are put into the ovens. Rows of ovens, with pleasant litter of fuel, oak and vine-stump, alongside! Also, in the little, dried-up orchard,

among the skeletons of fennel and caraway, and the parched vines laden with yellow grapes already halfway to raisins, the little, stiff plum-trees, pretty well bare and pathetically shabby.

There was a solitary big oak in that orchard, and in its thin shade a tiny tank with a thin runnel of water hard by the lavender-bushes. And in this poor, kindly, scorched country, that oak and that runnel took on a sort of oasis and almost sacred character, making one believe in the coolness and freshness they symbolized rather than brought, and suggesting, as my dear Gascon friend remarked, grateful statues to gods. A country, this Gascony (one felt in that orchard) kindly, sweet, infinitely humble; and so delectable, like its shrivelled prunes.

For other countries there is the luxuriance of grapes, the splendour of garlanded apple trees, the richness of grass and flowers distilling milk and honey; the classic solemnity of olives and the fairy-story marvels (oh, the gardens crossed by the railway near Malaga!) of oranges and lemons. But Gascony has the modest, shrivelled, sweet and delicately scented prune; ripened not even entirely in the sunshine, but helped by those mild, friendly ovens.

We were guided through all this faded sweetness by two dear old men; bachelors, brothers, having lived, one felt, since time immemorial, together all alone in that low, flat, white house hidden among farm buildings and big yellowing horse-chestnuts. Life seemed to have shrivelled and shrunk away from them, from their half-audible voices and little wizen faces, leaving only very gentle, tender souls, almost ghosts, gliding along. *Ces messieurs* offered us biscuits and champagne, which flooded the square-cut tumblers; but they themselves partook, ghost-like, of nothing; only clicking glasses over faint little toasts.

In their drawing-room, presiding over the faded furniture and the piles and piles of cigar and envelope boxes (emptied, one felt sure, through half a century), my friend pointed out to me, among the family portraits, a singular and very fitting personality. An old woman, quite old, old—of the eighteenth century, grey-haired, in a grey flowered wrapper, and a thin silvery scarf wound round her head, turban-like; with such a pair of living, burning eyes, such thin, yearning, ironical lips in her wrinkled little face, grey also. It seems absurd to harp

upon her greyness. But the whole picture was grey, misty ; and therein lay its harmony and charm ; as if you should have put a handful of faded old letters in the fire, and their ashes, their little puff of smoke, have gathered themselves (last embers helping) into a vivid, pathetic, ironical human face.

I could not take my eyes off her ; or, rather, she did not let me go. Perhaps it was partly due to the contrast with the ghostiness of these faded, frail old men gliding and whispering about in the old house and on the terrace, where the horse-chestnuts were already shedding their leaves, and great geraniums, run to wood, made unexpected vermilion spots against the mildewed whitewash ; their vividness making the musty, cobwebby peacefulness of that secluded place and of those gentle living ghosts only more poignant.

The sun was setting as we came away from the home of the prunes ; very pale gold and rosy washes lying along the low, blunt hill outlines, and reflected, among the willows, in the slow, muddy river. Dusk rose from the concave fields, with the first song of the crickets, as we neared home. Dusk not cool and tasting

of greenness as in other southern countries, but warm as of a drying-oven, and of deep, reddish darkness, solemn yet kindly. Is it my mood at present? But this country of Gascony, inconspicuous almost to homeliness, with its poor little burnt detail, its blunted outlines and humble refusal of all swelling or uprising lines, has got a power, methinks, over the heart, intimate and in its humility very solemn; a purely spiritual dignity and grace. The Genius Loci of these parts must be, and is, a human soul.

ERA GIÀ L'ORA. . . .

DEFEND us from the sentimental ups and downs of travel, the caprice and moodiness of the uprooted heart of the wayfarer. He is, take it all round, the least cheerful person in the world, for he is no longer disciplined into acquiescence with fate by those unchanged surroundings which look down on him with the familiar self-satisfaction of his grandparents' portraits. In his vague, irresponsible, wholly individual state, he becomes effeminate of soul, subject, like children, to gusts of melancholy. And the exhilaration of the first morning hours is compensated by those melting moods at sunset, already noticed by Dante; when, in a strange place, a bell (or, in more modern times, a barrel-organ or accordion) can become the voice of all dying things and tell of ten thousand partings. Nor is the homesickness of travel merely for home; far from our allotted corner

we strike roots, or put out tendrils with incredible rapidity, clinging, regretting, just in proportion as acquaintance has been short. I am not alluding to human friendships or loves, though there seems some truth in the notion of *amours de voyage*. As regard places, however, the traveller, although he may be a perfect Don Juan, is apt to be so in the oddest way, fickle to the one he has ardently sought, and longing for what he leaves behind. Have we not, all of us, cast homesick eyes on the receding train which has just brought us from that place (surely we were not serious in calling it a *hole!*) which we chafed at not leaving earlier this very morning? How familiar and kindly the thought thereof has already become, it and its inn, its dear dull streets there somewhere behind that range of hills! And as to this other place, beckoning foolishly with towers and steeples, what can it ever be to us, and why have we ordered our letters to be sent to its post-office? What a sweet half-hour that was, last night, watching the sky redden behind the lime-trees of the promenade while the bugles rang the *Rappel;* and how intimate, how peaceful was that total absence of all view,

which we pretended to (or did we really?) grumble at!

"There where I am not, there is happiness," sings the Wayfarer of Schubert. And never, surely, did verse and voice unite in a more correct account of the frail unreasonableness of the traveller's heart.

During that hour outside the outermost wall of Carcassonne, what had touched me infinitely more than all its show of battlements and towers was the recognition that here, close at hand at last, was the real South. The little town below, with its boulevards of great plane-trees and its black-guttered streets and big buttressed and turreted churches (bastards, it seemed to me, of the strange church of Albi), was still distinctly French. But on the rough grass and the flowering thyme under the citadel walls, with their heaps of rubbish and brickbats, the South seemed somehow at hand. After days of ceaseless rain in that French and still so Northern corner of Gascony which I have just left, here was the radiance of a Southern autumn, a sky against which the pepper-pot towers looked absurdly incongruous; against which, rightfully, rose in the distance a great

chain of peaks gleaming with snow — the Pyrenees.

Soon after Carcassonne the hills also changed character. I had guessed it, seeing them from those pepper-pot towers, their pure, pale luminousness in the distance, and their white scars. They were no longer the earthly *côteaux* of France, but rock and rock-grown herb, grey, sun-scorched. And suddenly, looking up from my book as the train sped along between Carcassonne and Narbonne, I saw, among the red and tawny vines, on a stony hillside, the first olives.

My heart leaped at that sight; it meant the South. How I had longed for it during those weeks in France, expecting to come upon it at every additional day's end, noting with eager eyes every little detail which seemed to tell of its nearness: the first fig-trees, the thin aftermath, burnt lilac and russet, the vines hung loose upon the black house-fronts. At Toulouse, on the first brilliant chilly autumn morning, it had delighted me to come upon the market, spread out before the long Louis XV. building of the *Capitole*, grapes, capsicums, melons, all manner of charming coloured beans

in sieves, and big mushrooms smelling of the mountains; and that delight had meant a thought of similar markets at Verona and at Siena—the thought of the South. It was the South that I had seemed to clutch in those fields outside Albi, with the handful of dry, lilac-flowered peppermint. . . . Clutch only to be disappointed. The further I went the more France remained France. And never more, almost, than in that western corner by the Garonne; the Garonne flowing between French earthy *côteaux*, and French pepper-pot turrets, and vineyards clipped short upon sticks, French fashion. "Where," I had always amused my friends by asking, "where does the South—the real South—really begin?" And added, when they protested "But *this* is the South," "What I mean is, Where doesn't it look like the rest of France any longer? Where shall I see the first olives?"

And here, on those stony little hills beyond Carcassonne, were the first olives.

That was in the morning; the morning, when the traveller's heart is flushed with the present and the future, and thinks, confidingly, that it loves, that it will love, its goal.

In the evening I had to wait an hour at Cette. The little seaport is beautifully situated with its back on a great salt lake, which you approach among vineyards encroached upon by purple sea marsh and tamarisk-grown lanes. You leave behind, inland, a series of little towns with names to conjure with : Narbonne, Béziers, Agde—Agde-la-Noire, as the history books call it, a great black fortified church projecting above its trees into the evening sky. Finding I had that hour at Cette, I took a cab, drove along the wharves, and walked the length of the pier. The sea was perfectly calm, a blue lake ; the white mole, the white wharves and lighthouses projecting into it, the harbour lights just appearing orange in the twilight. Nets were drying all along, and the place was full of sea smell. A big boat was going out between the lighthouses, going South, to Italy perhaps, like me, for this sea was the Mediterranean. France, and those days in that western corner in Gascony, was behind me. . . . That delicate and unobtrusive empty country, with its endless *côteaux* and shallow green valleys, how far it seemed, how far, far out of all my tracks. . . . The sadness of distance and change

of place! The sadness of this perpetual breaking-off, this leaving of life's phrase unfinished. These friends—how many, many have I had such! Seen, barely known, and then left; the secure steadiness, the right maturity of feelings interrupted, denied. Distance, difference of place and climate, things which put such zest, such poetry into life; but also, at times, such sadness. . . . When I turned at the end of the pier the sun had set behind the town, its rocky hill; and lights were beginning to make orange dots in the faint lilac of evening. Great torn feathers of crimson and black were floating in the west, whence I had come. And by the time I had retraced the length of the long white pier that brief Southern twilight was over. I got back into the train, and was borne away farther and farther from that westernmost corner of France—into the South, the South which I had longed for.

ALL SOULS' DAY AT VENICE

IT being All Souls' Day, we idle folk have been to *do* the cemetery. . . .

They had put a bridge of boats from the northermost quay of Venice to the cemetery island. A dense crowd, coming and going across it, black over the black anchored barges, each two with their yard of pale water between their tarred hulls. And, as we draw near, as we go beneath, the seeming silence turns into a murmur, a shuffle, and a rumble.

For this one day in all the year the cemetery island is bridged on to the islands of the living. This is no mere coincidence, but a real symbol.

The cloisters and the gardens are full as for a fair, crowds coming and going, buying tapers, lighting them at the glittering waxlights before the chapel, bringing a few flowers; and the smell of trodden sods and drenched, bruised chrysanthemums mingles, funereal, with the

stifle of all these poor, down-at-heel, recently drenched, unwashed live folk in the warm, moist air. A woebegone population, as that of Southern countries is apt to grow at the first touch of winter; the lack of food and comfort, the fecklessness and boredom, the blearness of scrofulous children, the terrible draggletailedness of pregnant women, the appalling misery of crones and old men, all becoming apparent even as the hidden stains and stenches come out in bad weather on these canals. Another thing is also more evident than it would be were the weather fine—that the gondola company have come some other time, and that only the poor, those who have no black clothes for such occasions, have trudged across that gratis-given bridge of boats; and are now tramping, unhindered by family piety, over the vaults of Grimanis, Giustinianis, Valmaranas, and the rich shopkeepers endowed with allegoric virtues and mourned by long gilt lists of relations.

But all this squalor is oddly solemn. And the presence of work-a-day clothes, of babies carried, and children dragged along; nay, the very provisions unpacked and consumed among the graves, brings home the importance and

universality of this yearly meeting of the dead and the living. Some of the great squares enclosed by cloisters are so crowded, the draggled black-bead garlands on high are so surrounded by moving, stooping, sitting figures, by people grubbing up weeds or arranging their poor flowers, that the tangle of purple and black things aloft, the trampled grass and the jostling crowd, give the impression of some queer vintage scene or hop-picking ; the black lantern or garland-bearing poles, bent or even wrenched out of the earth, completing the ironical likeness.

Part of the crowd are people merely doing vague honour to vague dead, whose little numbered headstones have perhaps been long pulled out ; their bones, years ago, thrown behind the gate marked "Ossuario," and their brief resting-place given to others ; or gaping, a long trench of freshly turned earth, in readiness for those still of this life. These multitudes of vague mourners tramp round the burial squares, looking about, stopping here and there, subdued by mere general contact with the fact of death.

But the real mourners fill the squares themselves, and attend to their own business.

Some are doing their year's gardening, weeding, as I have said, or dividing and replanting iris bulbs or arranging cut flowers in patterns. In one place a youth, sallow, and with a torn sleeve, was intently making a most elaborate bed, beautifully composed, of various coloured chrysanthemums, sticking the flowers in devices, after driving in four pegs to separate his grave from other ones, and carefully enclosing it with four black tapes. When he had finished he took the remaining flowers (flowers in Venice are nearly always bought, grown on the mainland or the outlying islands), made them into four tidy bushes, colour by colour, and fastened one carefully to each of the four little posts he had rammed in. He had all but finished when we arrived ; and must have spent most of his afternoon in such elaborate business. And when we and the other people were beginning to go away he was still perfecting it. On the headstone—that is to say, the little stone cube bearing the number of that pauper's temporary grave—was a woman's name and the date, 1890. Thirteen years ago ; and the lad could by no means have been more than two- or three-and-twenty ! Was it filial piety through

all those boyish years; or largely a certain artistic inspiration, a skilful artisan's or gardener's wish for an elaborate and tidy job, some form of pride almost unmixed with tenderer feeling? Whatever the explanation, this youth's little funereal garden of cut flowers represents the great unselfish impulses which, whatever their pretext, produce the immortal things—thought, art; and which are honourably linked to the passionate striving to baffle death which comes with death's earnest recognition.

In other parts of the cemetery little gardens were being made; and, more touching even, the little glazed lanterns, smelling of hot tin, were being kept replenished by watchful mourners, bottle of oil in hand. But there were less active yet more impressive ways of honouring the dead: people kneeling for an indefinite time before those little numbered cubes of stone, or sitting on the ground alongside. Several old women thus—squatting, not praying, but just staying there. Some had brought scraps of food; and one was taking snuff out of a bit of paper; all of them keeping the dead one company, staring before them into space and time. At one poor grave there was a group of

four, one at each corner: an old woman, a younger one, a man and a sickly child; all silent, blurred-looking. Surely for these poor folk there is a reality, if only a negative one, in this suspending of the labour, cares, the empty grind of life; and their hour of watching by the dead may be, in some way deeper than words can say, an hour of communing with the eternities.

While thus the cemetery was given up to the living and to the long dead; the scarcely dead, the real dead, were arriving here and there with the real mourners. I noted a mound of fresh earth, with the ritual trowel sticking in it, a couple of surpliced and shaven Franciscans reciting the prayers to a few blear, red-eyed people (a nun among them); all these newcomers and their ministering clergy seeming a little scared by intruding their own dead man or woman into this great public feast of those who have long passed beyond. And the crowd, on its side, looked surprised at this new and definite reality of loss in the midst of its vaguer mournings; this man or woman, only just dead, carried in among those shadowy memories.

Very touching also were the little framed

photographs, clean and evidently taken off some poor table or wall, and hung on the cross for the afternoon ; the dead pauper having his effigy also on his grave, like the rich man among his marble, if only for those few hours.

As we got back into the gondola the crowd was streaming only one way along the black bridge ; away from the cemetery, back into life.

ET IN ARCADIA . . .

THE snow in the Apennines had brought cold, sunny weather, and there was an austere alacrity about all things. I followed my dogs up the stony hillside with that little breathlessness which is uncomfortable and yet so pleasant to feel. Suddenly, at a turning, there came the smell, very sweet and peculiar, of burning olive twigs; and with it, to my soul, a pang and a vision of Sicily, Greece—the real South which I shall never go to.

Such homesickness for places I have never been to, is not uncommon with me at this time of year, and on days like this one; making me aware, unexpectedly, of fancied resemblances, and giving to details of the familiar Tuscan landscape a foreign significance and the poignancy of the rarely seen. The South! something exclaims within me. And I have vague recollections of the Odyssey or of Theocritus.

The thing which sets this mood a-going may be a wall, on which one sits, looking down on to green under olives (and the first bird of this year is probably singing among them), with a gnarled creeping rose, or an orange-tree against a house which seems whiter than usual. The place has become the sample, the beginning, so to speak, of another part of the world. The sea must be at the end of that stony little gorge through which the brook leaps from pool to pool of beryl green ; the sea, and no longer the misty plain, down there between the rocks, beyond the leafless poplars and the sharp reeds : the Mediterranean. And on it my thoughts take ship for those places where I shall never go—for the South, for Antiquity !

It always happens at this season. Perhaps it is the scant, delicate detail revealing finer lines, which thus turns corners of Tuscany into an imaginary Hellas. Or perhaps the mere sunny austerity of these rocky sere places, the twitter of birds telling of renewed life, suggesting what, to us, seem the homes of the world's happy youth. Be this as it may, the feeling, almost the illusion, is there : as yesterday, for instance, when the stony horn of the Fiesole hill, all

burrowed with quarries, became suddenly I know not what Grecian site, and the sheep among the thin olives were browsing on the walls of some Homeric city.

Yet in the pang which came with that sudden whiff of burning olive there was, undoubtedly, also envy. I happened to know that certain friends were setting out southwards, by Terracina, the Promontory of Circe (which I have only watched across the sea, veiling and unveiling), to Greater Greece and Sicily. And other friends, doubtless, are setting their sails for Syria, for archipelagoes where marble goddesses, Melian Aphrodite and Demeter of Gnidos, once lay buried under myrtles; and for the coasts (if it have any!) of the romantic little country where life was once so sweet that tombstones boasted—"and I, too, in Arcadia. . . ."

The older I grow, and the more philosophically contented with my lot, the greater my aversion to such cheap forms of consolation as make light of the good things which are beyond our reach: philosophy for foxes, sly beasts, and apt to pick up random cheeses, but of whom Æsop has not very many chivalrous traits to

tell! Apart from this last consideration, it is borne in upon me more and more, that we should be respectful towards our own desires, and handle our capacity for wanting very gingerly. They are, believe me, treasures of the soul, and multiply its riches. This is not the view taken by moralists in high places—Epictetus or Buddha, for instance, or Tolstoi. But I incline to think that when these preach the snuffing-out of our desires, they are led astray by the thought of the kind of persons who are for ever accumulating properties and multiplying opportunities of enjoyment. Now, my contention is that this happens, and so universally, just because the people in question—the covetous, the grossly grasping or far-fetching pleasure-seekers—are rather lacking in real desires than overstocked with them. They really do not want anything very keenly, and that is why, like those who lose their appetite for food, they always want something new—want, in fact, for the mere sake of wanting; their greed, like most moral evils, being a monster of that chimæra tribe classified by Rabelais as "*bombinans in vacuo.*" Whereas your genuine desires, sprung from the very

marrow of the individual constitution, pounce on their fitting objects with unerring aim, and never let go of them till every scrap and vestige is enjoyed. And then return and find unguessed crumbs; and once more, and again and again—an endless feast, you might almost imagine, off nothing. It was the love of Anthony, believe me, made Cleopatra, when already a grandmother, such that age could not wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety.

Moreover, and this is even more important and worthy of the consideration of moralists, desire, or let us call it less pompously, the *power of wanting*, is also the *power of creating*. "If you do not want a yellow robe, a mat to lie upon, or a small box of inlaid work in which to keep betel nuts," says an eminent Buddhist divine (I am quoting from memory), "you evidently do not set about making any of these sources of delusion, nor making other ones wherewithal to barter them; but you recline in the shade of the tree of superior wisdom, or hang by its branches head downwards in absolutely unified contemplation of nothing in particular, and with a most genuine foretaste of annihilation."

And so, if I did not *want*—it is the humble essayist and votary of the *Genius Loci* speaking at present—if I did not want the South, Sicily, Greece, Arcadia, it is probable I should not have felt that little stab of envy and sadness when the smell of burning olive-wood met me on my hillside. But it is certain also that I should not have made those places for myself, extracted and built them up out of this Tuscany lying at my hand. There would have been only one South, one Sicily, Greece, or Arcadia. Now there are two. . . .

Nor is it places only of which we thus make, I will not say duplicates, but rather, in many instances, revised, perfected copies. Our friends, our loves are similarly dealt with; and, in so far as we are of value to any one, ourselves also. The Soul's keen-eyed desires seek out whatever flakes of ivory and crumbs of gold exist in living realities; and, casting forth the clay (the clay, alas! of more than the mere feet), furnish the precious stuff which lacks; and in this manner frame the images enshrined in our hearts. And in our hearts those idols we have made become, perhaps, patron saints, gods, by dint of sheer reverent service done them.

Those simulacra—who knows?—shape into their own resemblance their poor living originals, abashed, divinely strengthened by their recognition. If we are worth our salt, we have all made some one, been made by some one, a little less undeserving of such gratuitously given faith and love.

Dreams, all this. . . . Perhaps. And we dreamers of dreams have, now and then, rough awakenings. But we set to dreaming again; and our dreams are more continuous, more tender, nobler—and, let me say, more potent and more fertile, than many folks' waking experience. For life is but the interchange of what we want and what we have, the ever richer give-and-take of reality and dreams.

To return to the hillside behind my house, going up which that whiff of olive smoke met me. Half-way up, and well inside it, there is a hidden ravine, stony, wild, and strangely remote, which bears for me a secret name. It is squeezed to a mere brook's trough by the great quarried rocks, with their thin scrub of myrtle and wild lavender, and, on the other side, by sloping olive-yards and oak-woods, at this season sere and of palest rosy copper. The

stream, translucent, winds in the shallows, twists between bushes and brakes of reeds like pennoned lances; and, at short intervals, leaps down a succession of little natural weirs, making pools, each varying in shape of rocky basin and depth of beryl green, and in the fancy of the falling water, like hair of different nymphs, combed into smooth masses or twisting in little wisps or curls. Black ilex branches hang, long and loose like wreaths, across; while, at distances, and where the stream is shallow, there rises a sheaf of sapling bays, slender and straight and sharp-leaved against the luminous rift of winter sky. Thanks to the stream's draught and the stony wildness of the hillside, the air has somewhat of the taste of real mountains; and the bleating of unseen sheep, the faint click from the quarries above, put a sense of remoteness, stiller than silence, about the water's voice and the first twitter of birds.

The ravine has, I have just said, for me a secret name. This is not quite true; or at least the truth is far less definite. I do not *call*, I *feel*, the place, Arcadia. Here, not an hour's walk from my home, it is, and at the same time tantalizingly, enchantingly, *is not*—

Greece, Sicily, the South of the Odyssey and Theocritus. The South I shall never go to.

For the humble *Genius Loci*, even like the great divinities of Olympus, is but an intangible idol fashioned out of what we have and of what we want.

THE END



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